

14 Nov 1784
921066
AN
ESSAY

UPON THE

CIVIL WARS.

OF
FRANCE,

Extracted from Curious MANUSCRIPTS.

AND ALSO UPON THE

EPICK POETRY

OF THE

EUROPEAN NATIONS,

From HOMER down to MILTON.

By Mr. de VOLTAIRE,
AUTHOR of the HENRIADE.

The Second Edition,
Corrected by Himself.

LONDON;

Printed for N. PREVOST and Comp. at the
Ship, over-against Southampton-street, in
the Strand. M.DCC.XXVIII.

(Price fitch'd 1s. 6d.)

THE HISTORY OF THE

BRITISH EMPIRE

FROM THE

FOUNDATION OF THE

EMPIRE

TO THE PRESENT

TIME

BY

JOHN H. P. J. J.





ADVERTISEMENT TO THE READER:

I*T has the Appearance of too great a Presumption in a Traveller, who hath been but eighteen Months in England, to attempt to write in a Language, which he cannot pronounce at all, and which he hardly understands in Conversation. But I have done what we do every day at School, where we write Latin and Greek, tho' surely we pronounce them both very pitifully, and should understand neither of them if they were uttered to us with the right Roman or Greek Pronunciation.*

I look upon the English Language as a learned one, which deserves to be the Object of our Application in France, as the French Tongue is thought a kind of Accomplishment in England.

Besides, I did not learn English for my Private Satisfaction and Improvement only, but out of a kind of Duty.

I am ordered to give an Account of my Journey into England. Such an Undertaking can no more be attempted without understanding the Language, than a Scheme of Astronomy could be laid without the help of Mathematicks. And I have not a mind to imitate the late Mr. Sorbieres, who having staid three Months in this Country without knowing any Thing, either of its Manners or of its Language, thought fit to print a Relation which proved but a dull scurrilous Satyr upon a Nation he knew nothing of.

Our European Travellers for the most part are satyrical upon their neighbouring Countries, and bestow large Praises upon the Persians and Chinese; it being too natural to revile those who stand in Competition with us, and to extol those who being far remote from us, are out of the reach of Envy.

The

The true Aim of a Relation is to instruct Men, not to gratify their Malice. We should be busied chiefly in giving faithful Accounts of all the useful Things and of the extraordinary Persons, whom to know, and to imitate, would be a Benefit to our Countrymen. A Traveller who writes in that Spirit, is a Merchant of a nobler Kind, who imports into his native Country the Arts and Virtues of other Nations.

I will leave to others the Care of describing with Accuracy, Paul's Church, the Monument, Westminster, Stonehenge, &c. I consider England in another View; it strikes my Eyes as it is the Land which hath produced a Newton, a Locke, a Tillotson, a Milton, a Boyle, and many great Men either dead or alive, whose Glory in War, in State-Affairs, or in Letters, will not be confined to the Bounds of this Island.

Whosoever had the Honour and the Happiness to be acquainted with any of them, and will do me the favour to let me know some notable (though perhaps not enough known) Passages of their Lives, will confer an Obligation not only upon me, but upon the Publick.

Like-

Likewise if there are any new Inventions or Undertakings, which have obtained or deserved Success, I shall be obliged to those who will be so kind as to give me any Information of that nature. And shall either quote my Authors, or observe a religious Silence, according as they think it proper.

As to this present Essay, it is intended as a kind of Preface or Introduction to the HENRIADE, which is almost entirely printed, nothing being wanting but the printing of the Cuts, which I must recommend here as particular Master-Pieces of Art in their kind: 'tis the only Beauty in the Book, that I can answer for.





THE
HISTORY
OF THE
CIVIL WARS
OF
FRANCE,

Upon which the HENRIADE
is grounded.

HENRY the Great, King of *France*,
was born in the Year 1553, in
Pau, a small Town, the Capital
of *Bearn*; his Father *Anthony* of *Bourbon*
Duke of *Vendome*, was of the Royal Blood,
and the Head of that Branch called
Bourbon, which formerly signified *Muddy*,
from a Place so call'd, which fell to their
Family by a Marriage with an Heirefs of
that Name.

A

The

The House of *Bourbon*, from *Lewis* the Ninth down to *Henry* the Fourth, had been almost always neglected, and reduced to such a degree of Poverty, that the famous Prince of *Conde*, Brother to *Anthony* of *Navarre*, and Uncle to *Henry* the Great, had not six hundred Pounds a Year of his own.

The Mother of *Henry* was *Jeanne d'Albret*, Daughter to *Henry d'Albret*, King of *Navarre*; a good Man, and a worthless Prince, rather slothful than peaceable; who bore with too much Resignation the privation of his Kingdom, which had been taken from his Father by the *Pope's* Bull, supported by the Arms of *Spain*.

Jeanne, Daughter to so weak a Prince, had yet a weaker Husband, to whom she brought for a Portion her little Principality of *Bearn*, and the empty Title of King of *Navarre*.

This Prince, who lived in a time of Factions and Civil Wars, which required a steady Mind, was always fickle and wavering in his Conduct; he never knew of what Party he was, nor of what Religion; neither fit for a Court, nor qualified to be a General: He spent all his Life in courting his Enemies, and in undoing his Servants; deceived by *Catherine* of *Medicis*, baffled and oppressed by the *Guises*, nay, cheated always by himself.

self. He was mortally wounded at the Siege of *Rouen*, where he was fighting the Cause of his Enemies against the Interest of his own House; and he died, as he had lived, uncertain and anxious.

Jeanne d'Albret was quite of an opposite Temper, full of Courage and Resolution, feared by the Court of *France*, beloved by the Protestants, esteemed by both. She knew all the superior parts of Policy, but never the mean Craft of Intrigue. It is very remarkable, that she turned Protestant at the very time her Husband turned Catholick; but from that day she was as firmly attached to her new Religion, as *Anthony* was wavering in his. By these means she became the Head of one Party, whilst her Husband was the Slave and Bubble of the other.

She took the Education of her Son entirely into her own hands. *Henry* was born with all the Endowments of his Mother, and he improved 'em eminently afterwards. He had nothing of his Father, except that easiness of Temper, which in *Anthony* was Uncertainty and Weakness, but proved in *Henry* Benevolence and Good-Nature.

He was not brought up like a Prince, in that effeminate Pride, which enervates the Body, weakens the Understanding, and hardens the Heart. His Food was

coarse, his Clothes plain ; he went always bare-headed, was sent to School with the young Companions of his Age, climbed up with them among Rocks and Woods to the Tops of the neighbouring Mountains, according to the Custom of that Country, and of those Times.

While he was thus bred up with his Subjects in a sort of Equality, without which a Prince is too apt to forget he is born a Man ; Fortune opened in *France* a bloody Scene, and through the Ruins of that Kingdom almost overturned, and over the Graves of many Princes untimely cut off, prepared him a way to a Throne, which he was in time to conquer, and to restore to its Grandeur.

Henry the Second, King of *France*, the Head of the Branch of *Valois*, was killed at *Paris*, in a Tournament, which was the last in *Europe* of these romantick and dangerous Sports.

He left four Sons, *Francis* the Second, *Charles* the Ninth, *Henry* the Third, and the Duke d'*Alençon* ; all the unworthy Posterity of the great *Francis* the First, all (except *Alençon*) ascended the Throne one after another ; all lived shamefully, died untimely, and without Issue.

The Reign of *Francis* the Second was short, but made famous by the first breaking out of those Factions, and by the beginning

ginning of those Calamities, which laid waste the Kingdom of *France* thirty Years successively.

He was married to that famous and unfortunate *Mary Stuart*, Queen of *Scotland*, whom her Beauty and Weakness led afterwards into great Faults, greater Miseries, and at last to a dreadful Death. She governed entirely her young Husband *Francis*, a Boy of Eighteen, without Vice, and without Virtue, born with an infirm Body, and a weak Mind.

Incapable of Governing by her self, she was totally directed by the Duke of *Guise*, her Mother's Brother; he influenced the King by her means, and laid deep the Foundations of the Grandeur of his own House. *Catherine de Medicis*, the late King's Widow, and the present King's Mother, began now to shew the first Sparks of her Ambition, which had been stifled during the Life of her Husband: But being unable to prevail with her Son against a young Wife, whom he loved passionately, and against the powerful Credit of the House of *Guise*, she thought fit rather to be their Tool for a time, and to establish her own Authority by the help of their Power, than to contend in vain against it.

Thus the *Guises* domineered over the King, and the two Queens; and being

Masters of the Court, were by course Masters of the Kingdom; the one in *France* being generally a necessary Consequence of the other.

The House of *Bourbon* was groaning under the Oppression of the House of *Lorrain*; *Anthony* of *Navarre* bore patiently many scandalous Affronts; the Prince of *Conde*, his Brother, still more bitterly abused, endeavoured to shake off the Yoke. He united in his great Designs with the Admiral *Coligny*, the Head of the House of *Chatillon*: These two Men were the most terrible Enemies that the Court had to fear; *Conde* more ambitious, more forward, more restless; *Coligny* of a more sedate Temper, stricter in his Behaviour, fitter to be the Head of a Party, indeed as unsuccessful in War as *Conde*, but repairing often by his Wisdom what seem'd irreparable, more dangerous after a Defeat, than his Enemies after a Victory; endow'd besides with as great a share of Virtue as those Times could permit, and as the Spirit of Faction could allow.

The Protestants began then to grow numerous, and to be conscious of their Strength.

The Superstition, the dull ignorant Knavery of the Monks, the over-grown Power of *Rome*, Men's Passion for Novelty,

velty, the Ambition of *Luther* and *Calvin*, the Policy of many Princes; all these had given rise and countenance to this Sect, free indeed from Superstition, but running as headlong towards Anarchy, as the Church of *Rome* towards Tyranny. The Protestants had been unmercifully persecuted in *France*; but it is the ordinary effect of Persecution to make Proselytes; their Sect increased every day amidst the Scaffolds and Tortures. *Conde*, *Coligny*, the two Brothers of *Coligny*, all their Adherents, all who were oppressed by the *Guises*, turned Protestants at once; they united their Grievs, their Vengeance, and their Interests together, so that a Revolution both in the State and in Religion was at hand.

The first Enterprize was a Plot to seize the *Guises* at *Amboise*, and to get the Person of the King into their hands: The Plot boldly contrived, secretly carried on, was discovered just as it was ready to be put in execution; the *Guises* punished the Conspirators in the most cruel manner, in order to terrify their Enemies from the like Attempts hereafter; more than seven hundred Protestants were executed. *Conde* was made Prisoner, impeached of High Treason, tried, and sentenced to death.

During his Trial, King *Anthony* of *Navarre*, his Brother, stirred up by his Wife, and by the *Colignys*, raised in *Guienne* a powerful Number of Gentlemen, as well Protestants as Catholicks, attached to his House: he went with this Army through *Gascogne*; but upon a single Message that he received in his way from the Court, he dismissed them all with Tears; *I must submit*, says he, *but I will obtain your Pardon from the King. Go, and ask pardon for yourself*, answered an old Officer, *our Security is in the Point of our Swords*. Whereupon the Nobility, who followed him, returned home with Scorn and Indignation: *Anthony* pursued his Journey to the Court, there he solicited for the Life of his Brother, being not secure of his own; and he intreated every day the Duke and the Cardinal of *Guise*, who received him sitting with their Caps on, whilst he was bare-headed and standing.

Every thing was now ready for the Death of the Prince of *Conde*, when on a sudden the King fell sick and died. The Circumstances, the Suddenness of this Accident, the Propensity of Mankind to believe that the untimely Deaths of Princes are never natural, gave course to the general Opinion, that *Francis* the Second had been poisoned.

His Death gave a new turn to Affairs : the Prince of *Conde* was set at liberty, his Party began to breathe, his Religion was propagated more and more, the Authority of the *Guises* declined, tho' not pulled down : *Anthony* of *Navarre* recovered a Shadow of Authority, which was enough for him ; *Mary Stuart* was sent away into *Scotland* ; and *Catherine de Medicis*, who now began to act the first part on the Stage, was declared Regent of the Kingdom during the Minority of *Charles* the Ninth her second Son.

She found herself intangled in a Labyrinth of inextricable Difficulties, between two Religions and several Factions struggling with each other, and contending for the Power.

She resolved to destroy them all, if she could, by their own Arms ; she cultivated the Hatred of the *Condes* against the *Guises* ; she promoted the Civil Wars, indifferent and impartial between the Church of *Rome* and that of *Geneva*, jealous only of her own Authority.

The *Guises*, who were zealous Catholics, because *Conde* and *Coligny* were Protestants, were a long while at the head of the Catholick Troops : Many Battles were fought, the Kingdom was laid waste by three or four Armies at a time.

The

The Constable, *Anne de Montmorency* was killed at the Battle of *St. Denis* in the Eightieth Year of his Age. *Francis Duke de Guise* was assassinated by *Poltrót* at the Siege of *Orleans*; *Henry the Third*, then Duke of *Anjou*, a great Prince in his Youth, tho' a mean King in his Maturity, gained the Victories of *Jarnac* against *Conde*, and of *Moncontour*, against *Coligny*.

The Behaviour of *Conde*, and his Death in the Battle of *Jarnac*, are too remarkable not to be mentioned: He had been wounded in his Arm two days before, and when he was just upon the point of engaging the Enemy, had the Misfortune to receive a Kick from a vicious Horse of one of his Officers; his Leg was broken by the blow; the Prince, without expressing the least concern, said to those who were about him, *Gentlemen, learn by this Accident, that prancing Horses are more dangerous than useful in a Day of Battle; let us go on*, pursued he, *the Prince of Conde, tho' with a broken Leg, and an Arm wound up, will engage without Fear, when followed by you*. His Courage was not attended with Success, he lost the Battle, all his Army run away; his Horse being killed under him, he stood upright as well as he could, against a Tree, alone, fainting with the smart
of

of his Pain, but still undaunted, and his Face turned towards the Enemy: *Montesquieu*, Captain of the Guards to the Duke of *Anjou*, passed by the Place where the unfortunate Prince was standing; he ask'd, Who he was? and being told, 'Twas the Prince of *Conde*, shot him dead in cold Blood.

After the Death of *Conde*, *Coligny* had upon him all the burthen of the Party. *Jeanne d'Albret*, then a Widow, committed her Son to his Care; the young *Henry*, at Fourteen years of Age, went with him through all the Toils of War; and Hardship and Adversity were his Tutors.

His Mother and the Admiral had no other view, than to settle their Religion in *France* independent from the Church of *Rome*, and to secure their own Authority from the Power of *Catherine de Medicis*.

Catherine had got rid already of many of her Rivals; *Francis* Duke of *Guise*, who was the more dangerous and obnoxious to her, as he was of the same Party, had been assassinated before *Orleans*. His Son, *Henry de Guise*, who made afterwards so great a Figure in the World, was but young; the Prince of *Conde* was dead, *Charles* the Ninth her Son, was broken to her hand,

hand, and submissive to her Will; the Duke *d'Anjou*, afterwards *Henry* the Third, was intirely in her Interest. She feared no other Enemies but *Jeanne d'Albret*, *Coligny*, and the Protestants: She thought one Blow could destroy them all, and fix her own Power for ever.

She worked up the King, and even the Duke *d'Anjou* to her Design; all Things were agreed on, and the Snares prepared; an advantageous Peace was proposed to the Protestants; *Coligny* tired with the Civil War, accepted of it eagerly; *Charles*, in order to leave no room for any Suspicion, gave his own Sister in Marriage to young *Henry* of *Navarre*. *Jeanne d'Albret*, allured by those deceitful Appearances, went with her Son, with *Coligny*, and with all the chief Protestants to Court. The Marriage was celebrated with Pomp, all the Endearments, all the Assurances of Friendship, all the Oaths which are sacred among Men, were profusely bestowed by *Catherine*, and by the King; the rest of the Court thought of nothing but Feasts, Plays, and Masquerades: At last, one Night (which was the Eve of *St. Bartholomew*, in the Month of *August*, 1572.) at Twelve a-clock, the Signal is given, all the Houses of the Protestants are forced open at once; the Admiral *Coligny*, alarmed by
the

the Uproar, rises out of Bed ; a Troop of Assassines rush into his Chamber ; one *Besme*, a *Lorrainer*, bred up a Servant in the Family of *Guise*, was at their head ; he thrusts his Sword into the Admiral's Breast, and gives him a back stroke on the Face.

Henry, the young Duke of *Guise*, the same who framed afterwards the Catholick League, and who was murdered at *Blois*, was at the Door of *Coligny's* House, waiting for the Assassination ; and cried aloud, *Besme, is it done ?* Immediately the Assassines threw the Body out of the Window. *Coligny* fell, and expired at the Feet of *Guise* ; the young Man trampled upon him, not that he was drunk with the furious Catholick Zeal of Persecution, which at that time intoxicated half *France*, but he was prompted by the Spirit of Revenge, which, tho' not generally so unmerciful as the fury of Religion, yet leads often to more base Actions.

Mean while all the Friends of *Coligny* are assaulted throughout *Paris* ; Men, Women, and Children are promiscuously slaughtered ; every Street was strown with expiring Bodies : Some Priests holding up a Crucifix in one Hand, and a Sword in the other, ran at the head of the Murderers, and encouraged them in
the

the Name of God, to spare neither Relations nor Friends.

Tavannes, Marechal of *France*, an ignorant and superstitious Soldier, who join'd the Fury of Religion to the Rage of Party, rid a horseback through *Paris*, crying to his Soldiers, *Let Blood, let Blood, Bleeding is wholesome in the Month of August as well as in May.*

The King's Palace was one of the chief Theatres of Murder, for the Prince *Henry of Navarre* had his Lodgings in the *Louvre*, and all his Domesticks were Protestants; many of them were killed in their Beds with their Wives; others were flying naked, and pursued by the Soldiers on the Stair-Cases, through all the Rooms of the Palace, nay even to the King's Antichamber. The young Wife of *Henry of Navarre*, awakened by the dreadful Uproar, fearing for her Husband, and for herself, struck with Horror, and half dead, runs from her Bed in order to throw herself at the feet of the King her Brother; she scarce had opened the Door of her Chamber, when some of her Protestant Servants rush into it for refuge; the Soldiers enter after them; they pursue them in the sight of the Princess, one who crept under her Bed was killed there; two others pierced with

with Halberts fell at her Feet, and she was all covered with their Blood.

There was a young Nobleman very much in the King's favour, for his comely Air, his Honesty, and a certain peculiar Happiness in the Turn of his Conversation. This was the Earl of *la Rochefoucault*, Great-grandfather to the present Marquis of *Montendre*, who came over into *England* during another Persecution, less cruel but not less unjust. *La Rochefoucault* had spent the Evening till Eleven a-clock with the King in a pleasant Familiarity, and had given a Loose to the Sallies of his Imagination with the utmost Mirth and Alacrity.

The King felt a Remorse, and was struck with a start of Compassion towards him; he bid him two or three times not to go home, but to lie in his Chamber. *La Rochefoucault* answered, he should go to his Wife. The King pressed him no further, and said, *Let him go, I see God has decreed his Death*. The young Man was massacred two hours after.

Few escaped in the general Slaughter; among these, the Deliverance of the young *la Force*, is a strange Instance of what Men call *Destiny*. He was a Boy of Ten years old. His Father, his Elder Brother, and he were seized together by the Soldiers of the Duke d'*Anjou*. These
Mur-

Murderers fell upon all three promiscuously, and struck them at random ; the Father and the Sons, covered with Blood, fell and lay upon one another. The youngest received not one Blow, counterfeited to be dead, and made his escape the next day ; his Life so wonderfully preserved, lasted Fourscore and Five Years. He was the same famous Marshal *de la Force*, Uncle to the Dutchess of *la Force* who is now in *England*.

Mean while many of those miserable Victims fled to the River-side ; some were swimming over to the *Fauxbourg St. Germain*. The King saw them from his Window, which look'd upon the River, and (what is almost incredible, but too true) he fired upon them with a Carbine. *Catherine de Medicis*, undisturbed and serene in the midst of the Slaughter, look'd down from a Balcony situated towards the City, encouraged the Assassins, and laugh'd at the dying Groans of the Murdered ; her Maids of Honour and some Ladies of the Court went down into the Street, and with an impudent Curiosity, tallying with the Abominations of that Age, observed the naked Body of one *Soubise*, who had been suspected of Impotency, and was just then killed under the Queen's Windows.

The

The Court reeking with the Blood of the Nation, tried some days after to palliate such a Crime with Forms of Law. They justified the Massacres with a Calumny ; they imputed to the Admiral, a Conspiracy which nobody believed. The Parliament was ordered to proceed against the Memory of Coligny, his dead Body was hanged in Chains at the Gallows of *Mont-faucon*. The King himself went to see that loathsome Spectacle, and as one of his Courtiers advised him to retire, and complain'd of the Stench of the Corps, the King answer'd, *A dead Enemy smells sweet.*

That the Head of the Admiral was sent afterwards to the Pope, is a thing which cannot be proved. Certain it is, that the Massacres of *St. Bartholomew's Day* are painted at *Rome* in the Royal Hall of the *Vatican*, with these Words under the Picture, *Pontifex Colignii necem probat.*

Young *Henry* of *Navarre* was spared rather by the Policy than by the Pity of *Catherine*, who detained him a Prisoner till the King's Death, in order to make him a Security and a Pledge for the Submission of the Protestants who should escape.

As to *Jeanne d'Albret*, she died suddenly two or three days before, and tho' perhaps her Death was natural, 'twas not a rash Opinion to believe her to have been poison'd ; since one *Renato*, a Perfumer, who

B

was

was come over from *Florence* in *Catherine's* Retinue, boasted of having sold poison'd Gloves to *Jeanne d'Albret*, some days before her Death.

However, the Execution was not confin'd alone to the City of *Paris*, the same Orders were sent from the Court to the Governors of all the Provinces of *France*; so that in a Week's time, more than a hundred thousand Protestants were massacred all over the Kingdom.

Two or three Governors only refused to comply with the King's Orders; one among others, call'd *Montmorrin*, Governor of *Auvergne*, wrote to the King the following Letter, which deserves to be transmitted to Posterity:

S I R,

I have received an Order under your Majesty's Seal to put to death all the Protestants in my Province. I have too much Respect for your Majesty, not to believe the Letter is counterfeited; but, if (what God forbid) the Order is truly yours, I have too much Respect for your Majesty to obey it.

Those Massacres wrought in the Protestants who escaped, Rage instead of Terror; their irreconcilable Hatred against the Court seem'd to supply them with new Vigour, and the Spirit of Revenge increased their Strength.

Not

Not long after, the King was taken with a strange Sicknefs, which carried him off in two Years. His Blood was daily stealing out, and gushing through the Pores of his Skin : Such an unaccountable Distemper, which was so much above the Knowledge and the Skill of Physicians, was look'd upon as a Divine Vengeance, as if the Blood of a Prince could atone for the Blood of so many thousand innocent Men.

During the Sicknefs of *Charles*, his Brother *Anjou* had been elected King of *Poland*, on account of the great Reputation which he had happily obtain'd when he was a General, and which he lost when a King.

As soon as he knew of his Brother's Death, he stole away from *Poland*, and ran into *France*, to enjoy the dangerous Inheritance of a Kingdom shattered by Factions, fatal to its Sovereigns, and stained with the Blood of its Inhabitants. He found at his Arrival nothing but Parties and Calamities, which he increased to the last degree.

Henry, then King of *Navarre*, headed the Protestants, and gave new Life to their Party. On the other side, the young Duke of *Guise* began to dazzle the Eyes of the World with his great and dangerous Qualities ; he had a Genius more enter-
B 2
prizing

prizing than his Father. He seem'd besides to have a fair Opportunity of aiming at that pitch of Grandeur to which his Father had opened the way.

Anjou, now *Henry* the Third, was reputed unable to get Children, because of the Infirmities, which the Debauches of his Youth had brought upon him. *Henry* of *Navarre* was the lawful Heir of the Crown. *Guise* tried to secure it to himself, (at least after the Death of *Henry* the Third) and to wrest it from the House of *Capets*, as formerly the *Capets* had usurped it from the Descendants of *Charlemagne*, and as the Father of *Charlemagne* from his lawful Sovereign.

Never did so bold an Undertaking seem so well and so happily laid. *Henry* of *Navarre*, and all the House of *Bourbon*, were Protestants. *Guise* began to ingratiate himself with the Nation by the outward Shew of a Catholick Zeal. His Liberality secured to him the common People, he had all the Clergy at his devotion, Friends in the Parliament, Spies at Court, Servants throughout all the Kingdom. His first politick Step was to make an Association under the Name of the *Holy League*, against the Protestants, for the Security of the Catholick Religion; half the Kingdom came with Eagerness into that new Project. Pope *Sixtus Quintus* blessed

bleſſed the League, and ſupported it as a new *Romiſh* Militia. *Philip* the Second, King of *Spain*, according to the Policy of all Sovereigns, who always help on the Ruin of their Neighbours, gave all ſorts of Encouragement to the League, in order to rend *France* to pieces, and enrich himſelf with its Spoils.

Thus *Henry* being ſtill an Enemy to the Proteſtants, found himſelf betrayed by the Catholicks, ſurrounded with ſecret and open Foes, and overpower'd by a Subject, who, tho' ſubmiſſive in appearance, was really more King than himſelf.

The only way perhaps to emerge from theſe Difficulties, was to join with *Henry* of *Navarre*, whoſe Fidelity, Courage, and indefatigable Spirit, was the only Match for *Guiſe*, and who could ſecure to the King all the Proteſtant Party, which would have thrown much Weight into the Ballance.

The King, over-ruled by *Guiſe* (whom he diſtrufled, but durſt not provoke) terrified by the Pope, betrayed by his Counſellors, and by his wrong Policy, took the contrary way. He put himſelf at the head of the *Holy League*, in hopes to maſter it ; he united with *Guiſe*, his Rebel Subject, againſt his Succeſſor and his Brother-in-law,

whom Nature and true Policy pointed for his Ally.

Henry of Navarre was now in *Gasconne* at the head of a little Army, while a strong Body of Troops was coming to his Relief from the Protestant Princes of *Germany*, through the Borders of *Lorraine*.

The King imagined that he could at once reduce the *Navarrois*, and sink *Guise*; in order to that, he sent the latter with a small inconsiderable Army against the *Germans*, by whom he had like to have been overcome.

At the same time he caus'd his Favourite *Joyeuse* to march against the *Navarrois*, with the Flower of the *French* Nobility, and with one of the strongest Armies that had appear'd in the Field since *Francis* the First. He was disappointed in all his Hopes; *Henry of Navarre* defeated intirely at *Contras* his powerful Army, and *Guise* got the better of the *Germans*.

The only Use the *Navarrois* made of his Victory, was to offer a sure Peace to the Kingdom, and his Assistance to the King; but he was refus'd, tho' Conqueror, because the King was still more afraid of his Subjects than of him.

Guise return'd victorious to *Paris*, he was receiv'd like the Saviour of the Nation, his Party grew more audacious, the King more despis'd, insomuch that
Guise

Guise seem'd to have triumph'd over him more than over the *Germans*.

The King, press'd on every Side, awak'd from his Lethargy, but too late ; he try'd to humble the League, he design'd to seize some of the most seditious Citizens, he had the Courage to forbid *Guise* to come to *Paris* ; but he felt at his own Expence what it is to command without Power. *Guise* came to *Paris* in defiance of his Orders, the Citizens rose up in Arms, the King's Guards were taken Prisoners, and himself invested in his Palace. Men are seldom good or bad enough. Had *Guise* attempted that Day against the Liberty or the Life of the King, he had been in all likelihood Master of *France* : but he let him escape after having besieg'd him ; and thus he did too much and too little.

Henry the Third fled to *Blois*, where he held the General States of the Kingdom.

These States resemble the Parliament of *Great Britain* in their Convocation, but are very different from it in their Operations ; as they are very seldom call'd, they have no Rules to guide them, they are generally made up of Men who never having been in any regular Meeting, know not how to behave themselves, and 'tis rather a Confusion than an Assembly.

Guise did not stick at going to *Blois* to defy his Sovereign before the Representatives of the Nation, after having expelled him from his Capital.

Henry and he made a solemn Reconciliation. They went together to the same Altar, they received the Communion together; the one swore to forget all the past Injuries, the other to be for ever true and obedient: And at that very time the King intended to put *Guise* to death, and *Guise* to dethrone the King.

Guise was sufficiently warn'd to beware of *Henry*, but he despis'd him so much as not to think him bold enough, even to attempt an Assassination. This Rashness betray'd him. The King was resolv'd to be revenged on him, and upon his Brother the Cardinal of *Guise*, the Partner of his ambitious Designs, and the most ardent Promoter of the League. He provided Daggers himself, and distributed them to some *Gascoons*, who offered to be the Ministers of his Vengeance. They murdered *Guise* in the King's Closet; but these very Men who ponyarded him refused to imbrue their Hands in the Blood of his Brother, because he was a Priest and a Cardinal; as if the Life of one who wears a Band and a Cassock, were more sacred, than that of one who wears a short Vest and a Sword.

The

The King met with four common Soldiers, who, as *the Jesuit Maimbourg* says, having not so much Honour as the aforesaid Gentlemen, killed the Cardinal for an Hundred Crowns a-piece.

The two Brothers were put to death under *Catherine of Medicis'* Apartment; but she was totally ignorant of her Son's Design, being at that time distrusted by all Parties, and forsaken even by the King.

Had such a Vengeance been perpetrated with the Formalities of the Law, which are the natural Instruments of the Justice of Kings, or the natural Veil to their Iniquity, it had terrified the League; but as it wanted that solemn Form, it was look'd upon as a villanous Murder, and did but exasperate the Party. The Blood of the *Guises* invigorated the Strength of the League, as the Death of *Coligny* had given a new Life to the Protestants. Many Towns in *France* declared openly against the King; he went immediately to *Paris*, but he found the Gates shut against him, and all the City in Arms.

The famous Duke of *Mayenne*, younger Brother to the late Duke of *Guise*, was then in *Paris*. He was eclips'd by the Glory of *Guise* during his Life; but after his Death he prov'd as dangerous a
Foe

Foe as his Brother ; for all his Qualities were as great, tho' not so shining.

The House of *Lorraine* was very numerous in *Paris*. The mighty Name of *Guise*, their Magnificence, their Liberality, their apparent Zeal for the Catholick Religion, had made them the Darlings of the City. Priests, Burgeses, Women, Magistrates, Soldiers, all united vigorously with *Mayenne* in the pursuit of a Vengeance that was thought very just.

The Duke's Widow presented a Petition to the Parliament against *Henry* as a Murderer. The Tryal begun according to the common Form of Law, two Counsellors were appointed to draw up the Articles of Impeachment against the King ; but the Parliament did not proceed further, the Heads of that Assembly being firmly attached to the Royal Cause.

The Doctors of *Sorbonne* were not so cautious ; seventy of that Society issued forth a Writ, by which *Henry de Valois* was deprived of his Right to the Crown, and the Oaths of Allegiance were dissolved.

But the most dangerous Enemies to the Royal Authority, were some private Burgeses of *Paris*, called *the Sixteen*, not because of their Number, for they were forty ; but from the Sixteen Wards of *Paris* which

which they had divided among themselves to rule over. The most considerable of these Citizens, was one *le Clerc*, who had assumed the great Name of *Bussi*. He was a bold Burgess and a bad Soldier like his Associates. These Sixteen had got an absolute Power, and grew at last as insupportable to the Duke of *Mayenne* himself, as terrible to the King.

Moreover, the Priests, who have ever been the Trumpeters of all the Revolutions in the World, thundered in the Pulpit, and assured in the Name of God, that whosoever should attempt to kill the Tyrant, should go infallibly to Heaven. The sacred and dangerous Names of *Ehud*, of *Judith*, and all the Assassinations which the Holy Scripture hath consecrated, were then cryed out every where into the Ears of the Nation.

The King in such an Extremity was forced at last to call to his Aid the same *Navarrois*, whose Help he had refused before. This Prince was better pleased to support his Brother and his King, than to have vanquish'd him.

He brought his Army over to the King, but before his Troops were arriv'd, he went forward to him, follow'd by a single Page. The King was amazed at such a piece of Generosity, which he had himself been incapable of.

How-

However, the two Kings marched to *Paris* at the head of a powerful Army. The Town was not in a condition to resist. The League was upon the brink of Ruin, when a young Fryar of the Order of *St. Dominic*, changed the whole face of Affairs.

His Name was *James Clement*, born in a Village of *Burgundy* called *Sorbonne*, and then four and twenty Years of Age. His surly Piety and melancholy Mind had been worked up to *Enthusiasm* by the common Cry of the Priests: He took upon him to be the Deliverer and the Martyr of the Holy League. He discovered his Design to his Friends, and to his Superiors; all encouraged him, and made a Saint of him beforehand. *Clement* prepared himself for his Undertaking; he fasted, spent whole Nights in Prayer, confessed his Sins, received the Sacrament, bought a good Dagger, and went away to *St. Cloud*, where the King had his Quarters. He asked for Admittance to the King, under pretence of revealing an important Secret, which could allow of no Delay. Being brought before his Majesty, he knelt down, and with a blushing Modesty delivered into his hands a Letter, which he pretended was writ by the first President *Achilles de Harlay*. As the King was perusing the Letter, the Fryar stabb'd him
in

in the Belly, and left the **Dagger** sticking in the Wound; then with an unconcerned Look crossed his Hands over his Breast, and lifted up his Eyes to Heaven, waiting for the Event without stirring.

The King cries out, rises up, snatches the **Dagger** from his own Belly, and thrusts it into the Forehead of the Murderer.

Many Courtiers rush in at the Noise. It had been their Duty to secure the Fryar, and reserve him for Examination and Torture, in order to a Discovery of his Accomplices. But they killed him on the spot with a precipitation that laid them under the suspicion of having known too much of his Design.

Henry of Navarre was now King of France by his Birthright, part of the Army acknowledged him, and part forsook him.

Duke d'Epemon and some others retired, alledging they were too good Catholicks, to fight for a King who did not go to Mass. They secretly hoped that a total Subversion of the Kingdom (which they wished for, and relied on) would give them an opportunity of making themselves Sovereigns in their respective Mannors.

X Mean while the Deed of *Clement* was approved at *Rome*; and himself worshipped in *Paris*. The Holy League acknowledged for their King the Cardinal of *Bourbon*, an old Priest, Uncle to *Henry* the Fourth, in order to show the World that it was the Hereticks, and not the House of *Bourbon*, which their Hatred pursued.

Thus the Duke of *Mayenne* was wise enough not to assume the Title of King, yet to get all the Royal Power in his hands; while the miserable Cardinal of *Bourbon*, whom the League call'd King, was kept Prisoner by *Henry* the Fourth during the remainder of his Life, which lasted but two Years.

The League more supported than ever by the Pope, assisted by the *Spaniards*, and extremely powerful by itself, was at the height of its Grandeur, and look'd down upon *Henry* the Fourth with that Hatred which Religion inspires, and with a Contempt begot by their Successes.

Henry had few Friends, few great Towns, no Money, a small Army; but his Courage, his Activity, his Policy supplied all those Wants. He gained several Victories, especially that of *Ivry* against *Mayenne*. This Battle was one of the most remarkable that ever was fought.

fought. The two Generals exerted on that Day all their Art, the Soldiers all their Courage; few Faults were committed on either side. *Henry* owed at last the Victory to the Superiority of his Knowledge and Valour; but he confess'd that *Mayenne* had fulfilled all the Duties of a great General. He was, said the King, deficient only in his Cause.

He proved as clement in the Victory as he was terrible in the Battle. He knew besides, that Power is often lessened by the full use of it, and extended by Moderation. He stopp'd the Fury of the Soldiers who were pursuing the Enemy, he took care of the Wounded, set at liberty many Prisoners. Yet so much Valour, and so much Generosity, did not mollify the Heart of the League.

The Civil Wars of *France* were now become the Quarrel of *Europe*. King *Philip* the Second was eagerly engaged in the Defence of the League: Queen *Elizabeth* gave all sorts of Assistance to *Henry*, not because he was a Protestant; but because he was an Enemy to *Philip* the Second, whose incroaching Power was dangerous to herself: She sent him five thousand Men under the Command of the Earl of *Essex*, her Favourite, the same whom she caused afterwards to be beheaded.

The

The King continued the War with various Success : In one Day he took by Storm all the Suburbs of *Paris*. He had taken the Town perhaps likewise, had he had no other View but to conquer. But he was afraid of giving up his Capital as a Prey to the Soldiery, and of destroying the City which he had a mind to save. He besieged *Paris*, he raised the Siege, he begun it again ; at last he blocked it up, and cut off all the Communications to the Town, hoping that the Scarcity of Provisions would force the *Parisians* to surrender without Bloodshed.

But *Mayenne*, the Priests, and the *Sixteen Burghesses* managed so dexterously the Spirits of the People, work'd up their Hatred against the Hereticks to such a Degree, and fool'd their Imagination to such an Enthusiasm, that they chose rather to die by Hunger, than to submit.

The Fryars and the Monks made a Show, which, as ridiculous as it was in itself, was yet of great use to animate the People. They made a kind of military Muster, marching in Rank and Files, wearing rusty Armours over their Cowls, having at their Head the Figure of the Virgin *Mary*, wielding Swords in their Hands, and crying, *they*
were

were all ready to fight, and to die in the Defence of the Faith. So that the Citizens, who saw their Confessors in Arms, thought really that they fought the Cause of God.

However, Scarcity occasioned soon an universal Famine. That prodigious Multitude of Citizens had no other Support but the Sermons of their Priests, and the fictitious Miracles of Fryars, who, by the way, had all Things in plenty in their Convents, while all the Town was reduced to starve. The miserable *Parisians*, lull'd at first by the hopes of being soon relieved, were singing Ballads in the Streets, and Lampoons against *Henry*; a Fact not to be related with probability of any other Nation, but suitable enough to the Genius of the *French* even in so desolate a Condition. That short-lived wretched Mirth was stopp'd quickly by the most serious and the most inexpressible Misery. Thirty thousand Men died of Hunger in a Month's time. The poor starved Citizens tried to make a sort of Bread with the Bones of the Dead, which being bruised and boiled, were reduced to a kind of Jelly. But such an unnatural Food afforded them no other manner of Benefit than to kill them the sooner. It is recorded and confirmed by all the Testimonies which can be credible, that

a Woman killed and fed on her own Child. Moreover, the stubborn Obstinacy of the *Parisians* was equal to their Calamities. *Henry* pitied their Condition more than they did themselves: his Good-Nature prevailed over his Interest.

. He suffered his Soldiers to sell privately all sorts of Provisions to the Town; thus it happened, what was never seen before, that the Besiegers fed the Besieged. 'Twas a singular Spectacle to see the Soldiers from the bottom of their Trenches send up Victuals to the Citizens, who were throwing down Money to them from the Ramparts. Many Officers, prompted by the Licentiousness common to a military Life, bartered a Sirloin of Beef for a Wench; so that one might have seen Women getting down in Baskets, and the Baskets hoisted up again full of Provisions. By these means the Officers were taken up with an unseasonable Licentiousness, the Soldiers got too much Money, the Besieged were relieved, and *Henry* lost the Town. For in the mean time an Army of *Spaniards* came from the *Low Countries*; the King was obliged to raise the Siege, and run again through all the Toils and Vicissitudes of War, till at last the *Spaniards* being driven out of the Kingdom, he came a third time before *Paris*, that was

was still more strongly bent against receiving him.

Now the Cardinal of *Bourbon*, that Mock-King, was dead : An Assembly was held in *Paris* under the Name of the General States of the Kingdom, to proceed to the Election of a new King. *Spain* influenced powerfully those States. *Mayenne* had a strong Party, who would have placed the Crown on his Head. At last *Henry*, tired with the cruel Necessity of waging an eternal War against his Subjects, knowing besides they hated his Religion, not him, resolved to turn *Roman* Catholick ; for the Priests were the only Enemies he was afraid of. Few Weeks after *Paris* opened its Gates to him, and what his Valour and his Magnanimity could never bring about, was easily obtain'd by going to *Mass*, and by receiving Absolution from the Pope.



was still more strongly bent against re-
ceiving him.
Now the Cardinal of Rouen, that
Mock-King, was dead: An Assembly was
held to elect another the Name of the Ce-
netal States of the Kingdom, to proceed to
the Election of a new King. Some in-
fluenced powerfully those States. Many
had a strong Party, who would have
set the Crown on his Head. At last
Henry, tired with the continual necessity of
warring on external, & against his Sub-
jects, knowing better they hated his Re-
ligion, than him, resolved to turn Roman
Catholic: for the Party were the only
Enemies he was afraid of. Few Weeks
after this opened his Gates to him, and
with the Valour and his Magnanimity
could never bring about, was easily ob-
tained by going to Mass, and by receiving
Absolution from the Pope.





A N
E S S A Y
O N
E P I C K P O E T R Y.

WE have in every Art more Rules than Examples, for Men are more fond of teaching, than able to perform ; so there are more Commentators than Poets, and many Writers who could not make two Verses, have over-charged us with voluminous Treatises of Poetry. All those Teachers seem to have much labour'd by their Definitions, Distinctions, &c. to spread a profound Obscurity over Things in their own Nature clear and perspicuous ; and 'tis no wonder if such Lawgivers, unequal to the Burthen which they took upon themselves, have embroil'd the States which they intended to regulate.

The greatest Part of the Criticks have fetch'd the Rules of *Epick* Poetry from the Books of *Homer*, according to the Custom, or rather, to the Weakness of Men, who mistake commonly the Beginning of an Art, for the Principles of the Art itself; and are apt to believe, that every Thing must be by its own Nature, what it was, when contriv'd at first. But as *Homer* wrote two Poems of a quite different Nature, and as the *Æneid* of *Virgil* partakes of the *Iliad*, and of the *Odyssey*, the Commentators were forc'd to establish different Rules to reconcile *Homer* with himself, and other new Rules again to make *Virgil* agree with *Homer*: Just as the Astronomers labour'd under the Necessity of adding to, or taking from their Systems, and of bringing in concentric, and excentric Circles, as the discovered new Motions in the Heavens.

The Ignorance of the Astronomers was excusable, and their Search after the unfathomable System of Nature, was to be commended; because it is certain, that Nature hath its own Principles unvariable, unerring, and as worthy of our Search, as remote from our Conceptions.

But it is not with the Inventions of Art, as with the Works of Nature. The same Fancy which hath invented Poetry,

try, changes every day all its Productions, because it is liable itself to eternal Vicissitudes. The Poetry and Musick of the *Persians*, differ as much from ours, as their Language. Even a Nation differs from itself, in less than a Century. There are not more Revolutions in Governments, than in Arts. They are shifting, and gliding away from our Pursuit, when we endeavour to fix them by our Rules and Definitions.

If I am to give a Definition of a Suit of Clothes, I ought not to describe any particular one. Neither the *Roman* nor the *Greek*, nor the *French* ought to be set up for a Pattern. A Suit of Clothes in itself, is the Covering of the Body, that is all that is essential to it. The rest is but accessory Ornament, which Fancy and Custom create, preserve, and destroy at their Will; and if we like one Fashion best, we are not to exclude every other.

So 'tis perhaps with *Epick* Poetry. The Word *Epick* comes from *Epos*, which signifies Discourse. An *Epick* Poem is a Discourse in Verse. Use alone has prefix'd the Name of *Epick*, particularly to those Poems which relate some great Action. Let the Action be single or complex, let it lie in one single Place, as in

the *Iliad*, or let the Hero wander all the World over, as in the *Odyssey*; let there be one single Hero, or a great many; happy, or unfortunate; furious as *Achilles*, or pious as *Aeneas*; let them be Kings, or Generals, or neither of them; let the Scene lie upon the *Indian Ocean*, as in the *Lusiada* of *Camouens*; in the *West-Indies*, as in the *Araucana* of *Alonzo* of *Ereilla*; in Hell, in Heaven, out of the Limits of our Nature, as in *Milton*; the Poem will equally deserve the Name of *Epick*, unless you have a mind to honour it with another Title proportionable to its Merit.

In so boundless a Career, the Point of the Question, and of the Difficulty, is to know what all polite Nations agree upon, and in what they differ.

An *Epick* Poem ought to be grounded upon Judgment, and embellish'd by Imagination; what belongs to good Sense, belongs to all the Nations of the World. The *Greeks*, the *Romans*, the *Italians*, *French*, *English* and *Spaniards*, tell us in all their Works, that they chiefly like *Unity of Action*, because the Understanding is better satisfy'd when it reposes upon a single Object, adequate to our View, and which we may take in easily, than when it is lost in the Hurry of Confusion.

They

They tell us, that such an *Unity* ought to be attended with *Variety*, as a *Body* is made up of *Members*, all different, and all conducive to the same End ; That the *Action* should be *great*, to strike us with *Awe* ; *interesting*, because we delight in being moved ; *entire*, that our *Minds* may be wholly satisfy'd.

These, and the like, are a kind of eternal *Laws*, submitted to by all *Nations*, because enacted by *Nature*. But the *Machinery*, the *Episodes*, the *Style* itself, and all that depends upon that *Instinct* call'd *Taste*, and upon the *Tyranny* of *Custom*, that is the *Point* in which there are too many *Opinions* and no *Rules*.

It is true, there are *Beauties* which the *Taste* of every *Nation* equally relish. Since all *Europe* hath set up the *Greek* and *Roman* Authors for *Models* of *Writing*, *Homer* and *Demosthenes*, *Virgil* and *Tully*, have in some measure united under their *Laws* our *European* Nations, and made of so many and different *Countries*, a single *Commonwealth* of *Letters*. But still our particular *Customs* have introduc'd among them all, a new *Sort* of *Taste*, peculiar to each *Nation*.

The best modern *Writers* have mix'd the *Taste* of their *Country*, with that of the *Ancients*. Their *Flowers*, and their *Fruits*,

Fruits, warm'd and matur'd by the same Sun, yet draw from the Soil they grow upon, their different Colours, their Flavours and their Size. It is as easy to distinguish a *Spanish*, an *Italian*, or an *English* Author, by their Stile, as to know by their Gait, their Speech, and their Features, in what Country they were born.

The *Italian* Softness, their Witticism, so often degenerating into Conceit, the pompous and metaphorical Stile of the *Spaniard*, the Exactness and Perspicuity of the *French*, the Strength peculiar to the *English*, their Fondness of Allegories, their running into Similes, are so many distinguishable Marks, which do not escape the Observation of proper Judges.

From their different Characters flows that dislike which every Nation shows for the Taste of its Neighbour. Hence it is that the Battle of the Angels in *Milton*, would not succeed among the *French*. Hence it is, that the long, but noble Speeches of *Cinna*, and *Augustus* in *Cornelle*, could not be tolerated upon the *English* Stage.

These

These following Lines of *Tasso*, are admired in *Italy*, learnt by Heart, and in every body's mouth.

*Colei Sophronia, Olindo egli s'apella,
D'una cittade entrambi, e d'una fede.
Ei che modesto é si com' essa e bella,
Brama assai, poco Spera, e nulla chiede,
Ne sa Scoprirsi, o non ardisce; e ella,
O lo Sprezza, o no'l vede, o non s'avede;
Così fin hora il misero ha servito,
O non visto, o mal noto, o mal gradito.*

There is nothing in these Lines, that offends against good Sense; but such a jingling of Words, that over-nice Symmetry of Expression, that curl'd Thought revolving on itself, won't methinks be applauded by a *French*, or an *English* Reader, who require a more serious and more majestick Simplicity in *Heroic* Poetry.

Among many Passages of *Milton*, which every *French* Reader would startle at, I beg leave to quote one, which has here more Partizans than Criticks; 'tis in the first *Canto*.

*At once as far as Angels Ken he views
The dismal Situation, waste and wild,*

*A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great Furnace flam'd; yet from those
[Flames
No Light, but rather a Darknes visible,
Serv'd only to discover Sights of Woe.*

Antonio de Solis, in his excellent History of *Mexico*, hath ventur'd on the same Thought, when speaking of the Place wherein *Montezuma* was wont to consult his Deities; " 'Twas a large dark subterraneous Vault, says he, where some dismal Tapers afforded just Light enough "to see the Obscurity."

Such daring Thoughts would be look'd upon as Nonsense, by a *French Critick*, whose Exactness is often call'd in *England* Timidity. And since the greatest Poet among the *English*, and the best Writer among the *Spaniards*, have not scrupled to indulge now and then such Flights bordering on Bombast, that proves at least, that in their Countries, the Authors have a more free Scope than in *France*.

I need no more Examples to demonstrate, that there is such a Thing as a National Taste.

This once granted, if we have a Mind to get a true Knowledge of *Epick* Poetry, it would be worth our while to take a Survey of all the different Poems of that Kind,

Kind, which have succeeded in different Ages, and in different Countries.

'Tis not enough to be acquainted with *Virgil*, and *Homer* : As in regard to Tragedy, a Man who has only perused *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, could not have an entire Notion of the Stage. We should be their Admirers, not their Slaves. We do not speak the same Language. Our Religion (the great Basis of *Epick* Poetry) is the very Reverse of their Mythology : Our Battles, our Sieges, our Fleets, are more different from theirs, than our Manners from those of *America*. The Invention of Gun-powder, that of the Compass, that of Printing, so many Arts besides newly emerged into the World, have altered the Face of the Universe; and an *Epick* Poet, being surrounded with so many Novelties, must have but a small share of Genius, if he durst not be new himself.

We send our Children to travel into neighbouring Countries, after they have read *Virgil* and *Homer* at School. Should their Time be ill employ'd in getting a thorough Knowledge of *Milton* in *England*, or of *Tasso* in *Italy*? Where are Monuments to be found, which better deserve the Observation of a Traveller?

Our

Our just Respect for the Antients, proves a meer Superstition, if it betrays us into a rash Contempt of our Neighbours and Countrymen. We ought not to do such an Injury to Nature, as to shut our Eyes to all the Beauties that her Hands pour around us, in order to look back fixedly on her former Productions.

'Tis a pleasure, no doubt, and a great Improvement of our Mind, to survey all the *Epick* Writers in their respective Countries, from *Homer* down to *Milton*, and to observe the different Features, and the various Dresses of those great Men.

'Tis a Task beyond the reach of my Capacity, to give a full prospect of them. I shall but faintly touch the first Lines of their Pictures; some abler Hand will add the finishing Strokes to this imperfect Drawing.

The judicious Reader will supply the Defects, and inforce the feeble Hints he will find in this Essay. My part is to propose, his to judge; and his Judgment will be right, if he attends without partiality, laying aside the Prejudices of the School, or the over-bearing Love of the Productions of his own Country.

He will mark the Progresses, the Sinking of the Art, its Rising again, and pursue it through its various Changes. He will

will distinguish the Beauties, and the Faults which are such, every where, and in all Ages, from those doubtful Things which are called Blemishes by one Nation, and stiled Perfections by another.

He will not be tyrannized by *Aristotle*, *Castelvetro*, *Dacier*, *Le Bossu*; but he will extract his own Rules from the various Examples he shall have before his Eyes, and governed by his good Sense alone, be a Judge between the Gods of *Homer*, and the God of *Milton*, and between *Calipso*, *Dido*, *Armida*, and *Eve*.

But if the Reader be so just, as to make Allowances for the Time, in which those different Authors have writ, it is to be hoped, he will look with some Indulgence on the Diction of this Essay, and pardon the Failings of one who has learned *English* but this Year, of one who has drawn most of his Observations from Books written in *England*, and who pays to this Country but part of what he owes to her. A Nurse is not displeased with the stammering Articulations of a Child, who delivers to her with much ado his first undigested Thoughts.

H O M E R.

IT would seem too assuming, and prove very useless, to expatiate upon *Homer* and *Virgil*, especially in *England*, where there is scarce a Gentleman unacquainted with *Latin* and *Greek*.

As to *Homer*, those who cannot read him in the Original, have Mr. *Pope's* Translation; they may discern the Fire of that Father of Poetry, reflected from such a polish'd and faithful Glass. I will neither point out his Beauties, since none of them are lost in the Translation; nor cavil at his Faults, which are for the most part lessen'd or embellish'd.

Let every Reader consult himself, when he reads *Homer*, and reflect how that Poem works upon his Mind; then he will judge if *Homer* hath reach'd to the utmost pitch of the Art, in any thing else but in that predominant Force of *Painting*, which makes his peculiar Character.

Notwithstanding the Veneration due, and paid to *Homer*, it is very strange, yet true, that among the most Learned, and the greatest Admirers of Antiquity, there is scarce one to be found, who ever read the *Iliad* with that Eagerness and Rapture, which a Woman feels when she reads the Novel of

of *Zaïda* : and as to the common Mass of Readers, less conversant with Letters, but not perhaps endowed with a less share of Judgment and Wit, few have been able to go through the whole *Iliad*, without struggling against a secret Dislike, and some have thrown it aside after the fourth or the fifth Book. How does it come to pass, that *Homer* hath so many Admirers, and so few Readers ? And is at the same time worshipped and neglected ?

I'll endeavour to give some Reasons for this Paradox. The common part of Mankind is awed with the Fame of *Homer*, rather 'than struck with his Beauties. The judicious Reader is pleased, no doubt, with the noble Imagination of that great Author ; but very few have Command enough over their own Prejudices, and can transport themselves far enough into such a remote Antiquity, as to become the Contemporaries of *Homer* when they read him : Good Sense bids them to make allowances for the Manners of his Time, but 'tis almost impossible to bring themselves to a quick Relish of them. The Rays of his Light transmitted to their Eyes through so long a Way, afford them but a feeble glimmering Twilight, and no Warmth. They are like the old Counsellors of

D

Priam,

Priam, who confessed without any Emotion of Heart, that *Helena* was a Beauty.

A second Reason of their Dislike, is that Uniformity which seems diffused through all the Work. The Battles take up three parts of the whole *Iliad*. The Reader is more likely to be disgusted by the continual Glare of that predominant Colour which is spread over the Poem, than to be pleased with the Variety of Tints, and Shades, which require a refin'd Sight to perceive them.

Thirdly, the Poem is certainly too long, and 'tis an Exception, that all the *Epick* Poets are liable to; for there is no *Epick* Poetry without a powerful Imagination, and no great Imagination without overflowing.

I wave here all the Quarrels raised by the Enemies of *Homer*, to such parts of his Poems, as may be the Objects of our Criticism, but never the Cause of our Sleep.

His Gods are perhaps at once absurd and entertaining, as the Madness of *Ariosto* amuses us with a bewitching Delight. And for his other Faults, the Majesty, and the Fire of his Stile, brightens them often into Beauties.

But in my opinion, the best Reason for that Languor which creeps upon the Mind of so many Readers, in spite of the
the

the Flashes which rouse it now and then, is, that *Homer* interestes us for none of his Heroes: *Achilles* is too boisterous to inspire us with a tender Concern for him. And suppose his very Fierceness could extort from us that favourable Disposition which the over-powering Idea of Valour generally forces us into, his long Idleness wears away the Thought of him, and as the Poet lays him aside, so does the Reader.

Menelaus, who is the only Occasion of the War, and in whom of course our Affections ought to center, is very far from being a shining Character. *Paris*, his Rival, excites our Contempt. *Menelaus* is in the Poem but the Brother of *Agamemnon*, and *Paris* the Brother of *Hector*. *Agamemnon*, King of Kings, shocks us with his Pride, without giving us any great Idea of his Conduct. I do not know how it comes to pass, but every Reader bears secretly an Ill-will to the wise *Ulysses*. The fair *Helena*, the Cause of so great Mischiefs, is insignificant enough. Nobody cares whose share she will fall to, since she seems herself indifferent between her two Husbands.

When two Warriors fight in the *Iliad*, we are awed indeed with the Description, nay often transported with their

Fury; but we feel neither Hope nor Fear for any of them.

We are like *Juno* in the *Æneid*,

Tros Rutulusve fuat, nullo discrimine ha-
[bebo.

We pity indeed the Misfortunes of *Priam*, nor will I quarrel with the Tears that we give to his Afflictions. I wish only that *Homer* would have interested us for the *Greeks*, throughout all the Poem, since he intends to praise them, and since they are the Heroes of the Poem; but I'll go no further than to observe, that if we are moved with the Sorrow of *Priam*, at the very End of the Poem, we are indifferent towards him in the Course of the Action.

Of all the Warriors, the courageous, the tender, and the pious *Hector*, deserves most our Affections. He hath the best Character, though he defends the wrong Cause; and he is betray'd by the Gods, though he hath so much Virtue.

But our Concern for him is lost, in the Crowd of so many Heroes. Our Attention is divided, and lessen'd, like a Stream cut into many Rivulets.

Thus the Reader's Imagination is often filled with great and noble Ideas, while the Affections of the Soul stagnate;

nate ; and if in any long Work whatever, the Motions of the Heart do not keep pace with the Pleasures of the Fancy, 'tis no wonder if we may at once admire and be tir'd.

If all these Reasons are contested (for what Assertion of our Mind is undisputable ?) I must add a further Observation; which is a Matter of Fact out of the reach of Dispute. Many of the Books of the *Iliad* are independent from one another ; they might be transpos'd without any great Alteration in the Action : And perhaps, for that Reason, they were call'd Rapsodies. I leave to the Judgment of the Reader, if such a Work, let it be never so well written, never so teeming with Beauties, can be interesting, and win our Attention.

V I R G I L.

MR. *Addison* was the first who considered in their proper View the Materials which compos'd the Structure of the *Æneid*.

It is certain *Virgil* fram'd his Poem out of many Fables concerning the Settlement of *Æneas* in *Italy*, handed down to his Time, which were credited by the People, with a kind of superstitious Belief.

In the like manner, it is probable *Homer* founded his *Iliad*, upon the Tradition of the *Trojan War*.

For to believe *Homer* and *Virgil* submitted before-hand, to the Rules laid down by *Le Bossu*, who bids an *Epick* Poet invent, and dispose the Constitution of his Fable, before he thinks of the Name of his Heroes, is not indeed natural: In all likelihood they did not cut the Coat, without knowing whose Shape it could fit. Such a Rule may be observed in Comedy, which deals chiefly in the Exposition of the Manners, and of the Ridicule of the Age; or delights in a Plot, made up of surprizing, but little Incidents, which never require the Testimony of History, or the Weight of any celebrated Name.

But the *Epick*, as well as the *Tragick* Poets, generally pitch upon a Subject, and a Hero well known, whose single Name must strike the Reader with Awe, and command his Attention. They adapt their Invention to the History, for if one should begin by laying down a Fable intirely of his own Imagination, all the Records in the Universe could not afford him an Event, adequate to his Plan; he must needs alter it. And I cannot apprehend why *Mr. Le Bossu* advises

advise to build what must necessarily be destroy'd.

Whatever it be, Part of the Events included in the *Æneid*, are to be found in *Dionysius Halicarnassus*. He mentions with Accuracy, the Course of the Navigation of *Æneas*. He does not omit the Fable of the *Harpies*, the Predictions uttered by *Celano*, the eating up of the Cakes, &c.

As to the Metamorphose of the Ships into Nymphs, if *Dionysius* does not mention it, *Virgil* himself takes care to justify such an Absurdity, by telling us, that it was an antient Tradition ;

Prisca fides facta, sed fama perennis.

It seems that *Virgil*, ashamed of such a fairy Tale, hath a mind to excuse it by the common Belief.

Many Passages of *Virgil* considered in this View, are intirely vindicated against his Criticks, whose good Sense was misled in that Particular by their Inattention.

If an Author among the *French* attempts a Poem on *Clovis*, he is allow'd to speak of the Holy Vial, brought down from Heaven in the Bill of a Dove, into the Church of *Rheims*, for the Coronation of the King. If an *English* Wri-

ter takes King *Arthur* for his Subject, he may without Censure bring in the Incantations of *Merlin*, it being the Fate of all those antient Fables, which the Beginning of every Nation is involv'd in, to be rever'd for their Antiquity, when they are laugh'd at for their Absurdity: but upon the Whole, it would be better to omit them, though we are allow'd to mention them; for a single Reader of Sense, who will be shock'd at such Stories, deserves more Respect, than the Crowd which gives them Credit.

As to the Construction of his Fable, he is accus'd by some, and commended by others, for having follow'd *Homer* closely; but if I dare speak my Opinion, he deserves neither such an Injury, nor such a Compliment. He could not avoid introducing the Gods of *Homer*, who were the *Roman* Gods too, nor talking of the Siege of *Troy*, since *Æneas* was a *Trojan* Hero.

Those Things were common to the *Greek* Author, and to him. He draws his Richesses from the same Source, but not at the Expence of his Predecessor.

Virgil, 'tis true, hath translated some Passages of the *Iliad*, and of the *Odyssey*; he hath borrow'd some little Descriptions, some obvious Similes, which surely

ly his great Genius did not want, by which but a little Glory could accrue to him, and which are rather an Honour paid by him to *Homer*, than a Proof of his standing in need of Help.

'Tis pleasant to see how some Criticks have triumph'd, in the Discovery of those Trifles. Those who take up Arms for *Homer*, against *Virgil*, and who sacrifice the Pleasure of being pleas'd with both, to the chimerical Fancy of raising the Glory of the one, at the expence of the other, pretend that *Dido* is the Copy of *Calipso* : That *Æneas* is sent to the Shades after *Ulysses*, and the like. Let the Readers compare those pretended Copies with the suppos'd Original, they will find a wonderful Difference.

The Passion of *Dido*, her Misfortune, her Death, brought in as the Cause of that everlasting Hatred between *Carthage* and *Rome*; and *Anchises* calling forth from the Womb of Time, the Fate of the *Roman* Empire; all these Beauties are not certainly owing to *Homer*.

It is not in the Nature of a Genius, to be a Copist. Wherever *Virgil* is great, he is himself; but in those little Passages borrow'd from *Homer*, he commonly falls short of the Original; and 'tis a just Punishment for having clogg'd the
Liberty

Liberty of his Genius, with the Fetters of Imitation.

Some Criticks proceed further ; they tell us, *Virgil* has copied his second Book from *Pisander*, and the fourth after *Apollonius*.

If he has stolen from them, then he hath not robb'd *Homer*. But all that ought to be flatly deny'd ; and the only Answer which is to be made to such Discoveries, is, that the second and fourth Book of *Virgil*, are too great Master-Pieces of Art to be but Copies.

'Tis just as some People say *Milton* hath stolen his Poem from an *Italian* Stroller call'd *Andreino*.

And after all, what avails such a trifling Enquiry ? 'Tis not the Person of *Virgil*, 'tis the *Æneid* which we admire ; let the second and the fourth Book belong to *Pisander*, to *Apollonius*, or to *Virgil*, or to any body else, the Name of the Author does not alter the Beauties of the Book. Let *Macrobius* and other Criticks detract from the six Letters which make up the Name of *Virgil*, his Works will nevertheless be the Delight of all Ages, and the Pattern of all Poets.

Another Objection against him, is, that he hath not crowded in his Poems so many Heroes as *Homer* hath done. That *Ajax*, *Diomedes*, *Idomeneus*, &c. are

are all shining Characters; whereas the faithful *Achates*, the strong *Gias*, and the magnanimous *Cloanthus*, are of no manner of Use, and serve only but to fill now and then the Gap of a Verse or two.

I am apt to think, that such an Objection turns a great deal to the Advantage of the *Æneid*. *Virgil* sung the Actions of *Æneas*, and *Homer* the Idleness of *Achilles*.

The *Greek* Poet lay under the Necessity of supplying the Absence of his first Hero, with some other Warriors; but what was judicious in *Homer*, would have been preposterous in *Virgil*: He knew too much of his Art, to drown his principal Character in the Crowd of many other Heroes, indifferent to the main Action.

Thus he found the Way to center our Concern in *Æneas*; he interestes us for him, by never losing sight of him, while *Homer* presenting us with the shifting Scene of so many shining Characters, interestes us for none.

Mr. *De St. Evremont* says, *Æneas* is fitter to be the Founder of an Order of Monks, than of an Empire. 'Tis true, *Æneas* hath the Misfortune to pass generally under the Notion of a pious Man, and not a great Warrior; the Fault

Fault is not in *Virgil*, it lies in the wrong Notions which the Generality of Mankind entertains of Courage. Our Eyes are dazzl'd with the boisterous Fury of a wild Hero. Had *Virgil* been less wise, had the Courage of *Æneas* been a barbarous Rashness, instead of a sedate, and calmly-daring Valour, perhaps he might please better, but surely he would deserve it less.

It is a just Criticism on *Virgil*, that the latter Part of his Poem is less animated than the first, not that the six last Books are intirely languishing, but their milder Light is overpowered by the Lustre of the others.

That great Defect is owing to the Disposition of the Poem, and to the Nature of the Things. The Design of a Match between *Æneas* and *Lavinia*, unknown and indifferent to each other, and a War rais'd about a Stag wounded by a young Boy, could not indeed command our Concern as well as the burning of *Troy*, and the Love of *Dido*.

'Tis a great Mistake to believe an Author can soar, when the Subject sinks. All the Art he employs, shews only that he till'd with Labour and Skill an ungrateful Soil. If the natural Chain of Events in the *Æneid* could have allow'd *Virgil* to rise by degrees in point of Sentiments

timents and Grandeur ; his Poem had been as unexceptionable as the Bounds of human Talents will permit. In short, his Fault lies in having reach'd to the utmost pitch of the Art in the middle of his Course.

L U C A N.

After we have lifted up our Eyes towards *Virgil*, and *Homer*, we need not look down on the other *Roman* Authors who have been stumbling in the same Career. Let us lay aside their mean and monstrous Mimicks, *Statius*, and *Silius Italicus* ; but we ought not to overlook *Lucan*, who took entirely a new Course, and whose free Genius borrow'd neither its Beauties, nor its Faults.

He was of an antient Equestrian Family, born at *Cordova* in *Spain* under *Caligula* ; he was brought to *Rome* when eight Months old, and educated there, under the Influence of his Uncle *Seneca*, with the nice Care that his Birth, his opulent Fortune, and especially the Pregnancy of his early *Genius* deserved. I mention this, only to silence those Criticks who have call'd in question the Purity of his Language ; they took him for a *Spaniard*, who wrote *Roman* Verses ; and prepossessed with that Notion, they fancied they discovered in his Language
some

some Faults which do not really exist ; and which if they did exist, could not be perceiv'd by any Modern.

He was at first a Favourite to *Nero*, till he had the noble Imprudence to contend with him for the Prize of Poetry, and the dangerous Honour of carrying it.

He praised that Emperor in his *Pharsalia*, while *Nero* was yet the Delight of the Empire ; he conspired against him, when the Emperor became a Tyrant. All the World knows he was sentenced to die ; and the Choice of the Manner of his Death being left to him, he chose to have the Veins of his Arms and Legs open'd in a hot Bath ; and died with that Tranquillity, which in those moments is the true Greatness of Soul.

He was not the first who thought a recent History the proper Subject of an *Epick* Poem, for *Varius* had ventur'd before him (and with Success) on such a dangerous Undertaking.

The Proximity of the Times, and the Notoriety of the Events which he took for his Theme, were certainly a great Clog to his Poetical Invention, (if he had any.)

The greater his Subject was, the greater the Difficulty. *Cæsar* and *Pompey* were, no doubt, Men of higher Importance

tance than *Agamemnon*, or *Æneas*; and the War waged before the Walls of *Troy*, and before *Latium*, were but Frays of Children in comparison of the *Roman Civil War*, in which the greatest Men of *Rome* fought for the Empire of the World.

Lucan could hardly give any scope to his Imagination on a Subject so well known, and with more difficulty come up to its Grandeur. On these accounts the Frame of his Poem is dry and tedious, because he dares not deviate from the History; and his Style swells too often into *Fustian*, when he endeavours to raise it to the Actions of his Heroes.

So *Æneas* and *Achilles*, who were inconsiderable in themselves, are for ever great in *Homer* and *Virgil*; while *Cæsar* and *Pompey* sink under the Bombast of *Lucan*. 'Tis a great pity that the Pictures of his Heroes being drawn with such masterly Strokes, their Actions are so little affecting.

Nothing is more beautiful than the Character of *Cato*, of *Cæsar*, and of *Pompey*; but nothing more languishing than the part which they act. *Lucan* with all the force of his Painting, with his Grandeur, with his Wit, with his political Notions, is but a declamatory Gazetteer:

Sub-

Sublime here and there, faulty through all the Work.

He is to be commended for having laid the Gods aside, as much as *Homer* and *Virgil* for having made use of that Machinery. Those Fables were adapted to the dark fabulous Ages in which *Priam* and *Latinus* lived, but no way suitable to the Wars of *Rome*. What brightens the Character of *Æneas*, and confers a Majesty on the inconsiderable Beginnings of *Rome*, would have debased the Character of *Cæsar*, and drawn a Ridicule upon him. What a poor Figure would that Conqueror make in the Field of *Pharsalia*, should he be assisted by *Iris*, or by *Mercury*?

Methinks that shows evidently that the Intervention of the Gods is not absolutely required in an *Epick* Poem. They are so far from being necessary, that the best Passage of *Lucan* (and perhaps of all the Poets) is the Speech of *Cato* in the ninth Book, when he scorns to consult *Jupiter*. 'Tis not for want of Gods, but for want of managing with Art the Affairs of Men, that *Lucan* is inferior to *Virgil*.

The Judgment of the World is justly passed upon him. He is looked upon as a strong Genius, tho' not as a good Poet; and the precious Stones which shine in the
Phar-

Pharsalia, (tho' ill fet) yet dazzle and shine in our Eyes. Monsieur *de Corneille* was used to say, that he was more indebted to *Lucan* than to *Virgil*. Not that he was so unjust, and of so injudicious a Taste, as to prefer the *Pharsalia* to the *Æneid*. But an Author who brings real Heroes upon the Stage, has but little to do with Poetical Fictions, and will be better help'd by the vigorous Thoughts of *Lucan*, than by the elegant Narration of *Virgil*. Mr. *Addison* borrow'd from the *Pharsalia* some Strokes, in the drawing of his *Cato*. That antient Poet never received a greater Honour, than when he was imitated by Mr. *de Corneille*, and by Mr. *Addison*, two Men every way superior to him.

TRISSINO.

AFTER the Fall of the Roman Empire in the *West*, several Kingdoms rose out of its Ruins, and many Languages were form'd out of the Remains of the *Latin* Tongue. The *Northern* Invaders brought every where their Roughness and their Ignorance : Their Language made up at first of a corrupted *Latin*, and of irregular *Gothick*, was as uncouth as their Manners, and as destitute of Words, as their Minds of Ideas.

E

In

In the Course of a Thousand Years, the *Italians*, the *French*, the *Spaniards*, refin'd their Manners and their Idioms. And Learning spreading itself by degrees almost over all *Europe*, enlarg'd the Sphere of every Language.

Many Writers complain now-a-days, that the *Latin* is used only in the Schools, and in the *Romish* Churches; they upbraid the Insufficiency of modern Languages; they say that their own Idioms sink under their Imagination. But they would have more to complain of, if, according to their Desires, the *Latin* was still the Language of *Europe*; for in that case, very little Room would be left for their Labours. A Multitude of Ancient Authors more generally read, and better understood, would shut up all the Avenues to the Ambition of the Modern. To imitate *Virgil* or *Tully*, would be a Plagiarism; to deviate from them, an Affectation: The World, over-stock'd with Models of Writing, would discountenance any new Endeavour; and the greatest Genius would be discouraged.

On the contrary, he who writes in a modern Language, hath the Ancients for his Guides, not for his Rivals; when he imitates them, he enriches his own Country; the particular Cast of his Mother-tongue, awakens his Imagination
into

into new Turns, and bestows an Air of Novelty on some Conceptions, which otherwise would have appear'd too common. In short, every new Language occasions some new Productions.

The *Italian* Tongue, was, at the End of the fifteenth Century, brought to the Perfection, in which it continues now ; and in which it will remain, as long as *Tasso* in Poetry, and *Machiavel* in Prose, shall be the Standard of the Stile.

Tasso was in his Childhood, when *Trissino* (the Author of the first Tragedy written in a modern Language) launch'd out into the Attempt of an *Epick* Poem. His Subject was *Italy* deliver'd from the *Goths* by *Belisarius* under *Justinian*. The Subject was noble, the Performance was mean, but still succeeded ; and this Dawning shone a little in a Time of Darkeness, till it was absorb'd in the broad Day of *Tasso*.

Trissino was a Man of great Parts, and of extensive Learning ; he was employ'd by *Leo* the Tenth in many great Affairs, and had succeeded very well in his Embassy to the Emperor *Charles* the Fifth. But at last he sacrificed his Ambition, and worldly Affairs, to his Passion for Letters ; which at that Time were reputed honourable, because they were newly reviv'd in *Europe*, and in the Glo-

ry of their Prime. He was justly fond of *Homer*, and yet his great Fault is to have imitated him ; for Imitation requires more Art than is generally believed. The Flowers of the Ancients appear but wither'd, when gather'd by unskilful Hands. This I insist upon, because nothing is more common than Authors who mangle *Homer* and *Virgil* in their own Productions, and screen themselves under those great Names, without suspecting that the very Things, which are to be admired in *Virgil*, may be ridiculous in them.

Thus *Trissino*, for Example, endeavours to imitate that beautiful Passage of *Homer*, where *Juno* having summon'd all her Charms, and adorn'd with the Girdle of *Venus*, deludes her Husband into an unusual Fondness.

The Wife of *Justinian* hath the same Design upon her Husband. First she washes herself in her fine Closet, she puts on a clean Shift, and after the long Enumeration of all the Trinkets of her Toilet, she comes alone into a little Garden where the Emperor was sitting down : She coins a Lye, she allures him by some Coquettries, and at last the Emperor——

Le Diede un Bacio

Suarue ; é, le getto le braccia all collo.

E

E ella stette e sorridendo disse.
Signor mio dolce hor che volete fare ?
Che se venisse alguno in questo luogo
E ci vedesse, havrei tanta vergogna
Che più non ardirei levar la fronte :
Entriamo nelle nostre usate Stanze,
Chiudamo li usci, e sopra il vostro letto
Ponianci, e fate poi, quel che vi piace.
L'Imperador rispose ; alma mia vita,
Non dubitate dela vista altrui :
Che qui non puo venir Persona humana,
Senon per la mia Stanza. E io la chiusi
Come qui venni, e ho la chiave a canto ;
E penso che ancor vi chiudeste l'uscio
Che vien in esso dele Stanze vostre ;
Perche giamai non lo lasciate aperto :
E detto questo, subito abbraciolla ;
Poi se colcar ne la minuta herbeta,
La quale allegra lii fioriva d'intorno, &c.

“ The Emperor gave her a Kiss, and
 “ folded her tenderly in his Arms. She
 “ paused a little, and said, O my Sweet
 “ Lord, what will you do ! should any
 “ body come hither and spy us, I could
 “ never show my Face, for Shame : Let
 “ us step into our Bed-Chamber, let
 “ us lock up all the Doors, and when
 “ we are together upon our Bed, you
 “ may do with me what you please. The

“ Emperor answered, My Dear, my Soul !
 “ do not lie under any fear of being
 “ discovered : For not one living Soul
 “ can arrive at us, but through my
 “ Chamber ; I took care to shut the Door
 “ as I came hither, and I have the Key
 “ in my Pocket ; I suppose too, you have
 “ the Key of the Back-door, which o-
 “ pens from your Apartment into mine,
 “ for you never leave it open : he said,
 “ and hugged her. The tender Grass
 “ on which they dallied, rejoiced at their
 “ Pleasures, and shot forth into tender
 “ Flowers.”

Thus what is beautiful and noble be-
 tween *Jove* and *Juno*, becomes as low
 and as distasteful between the old *Justi-*
nian and *Theodora* ; as when, among us,
 a Man and Wife caress one another before
 Company.

Trissino hath especially endeavour'd to
 follow *Homer* in the Detail of the De-
 scriptions ; but he is very accurate in de-
 scribing the Furniture of the Houses of
 his Heroes : He does not omit a Button,
 or a Garter in their Dresses ; and does
 not say a Word of their Characters.

However, I do not mention him only
 to point out his Faults ; but to give him
 the just Praises he deserves, for having
 been the first in *Europe*, who attempted
 an

an *Epick* Poem, in a vulgar Tongue, and in blank Verse ; for not having been guilty of a single Quibble in his Works, though he was an *Italian* ; and for having introduc'd less Magicians, and fewer enchanted Heroes, than any Author of his Nation.

CAMOUENS.

WHILE *Trissino* was clearing away the Rubbish in *Italy*, which Barbarity and Ignorance had heap'd up for ten Centuries, in the Way of the Arts and Sciences, *Camouens* in *Portugal* steer'd a new Course, and acquir'd a Reputation which lasts still among his Countrymen, who pay as much Respect to his Memory, as the *English* to *Milton*.

He was a strong Instance of the irresistible Impulse of Nature, which determines a true Genius to follow the Bent of his Talents, in spite of all the Obstacles, which could check his Course.

His Infancy lost amidst the Idleness and Ignorance of the Court of *Lisbon* ; his Youth spent in romantick Loves, or in the War against the *Moors* ; his long Voyages at Sea, in his riper Years ; his Misfortunes at Court, the Revolutions of his Country ; none of all these could suppress his Genius.

Emanuel the Second, King of *Portugal*, having a mind to find a new Way to the

East-Indies by the Ocean, sent *Velasco de Gama* with a Fleet in the Year 1497, to that Undertaking, which being new, was accounted rash and impracticable; and which of course gain'd him a great Reputation when it succeeded.

Camouens follow'd *Velasco de Gama* in that dangerous Voyage, led by his Friendship to him, and by a noble Curiosity, which seldom fails to be the Character of Men born with a great Imagination.

He took his Voyage for the Subject of his Poem; he enjoy'd the sensible Pleasure, which no body had known before him, to celebrate his Friend, and the Things which he was an Eye-Witness of. He wrote his Poem, Part on the *Atlantic Sea*, and Part on the *Indian Shore*; I ought not to omit, that in a Shipwreck on the Coasts of *Malabar*, he swam a-shore, holding up his Poem in one Hand, which otherwise had been perhaps lost for ever.

Such a new Subject, manag'd by an uncommon Genius, could not but produce a Sort of *Epick* Poetry unheard of before.

There no bloody Wars are fought, no Heroes wounded in a thousand different Ways; no Woman enticed away, and the

the World over-turn'd for her Cause ;
no Empire founded ; in short, nothing of
what was deem'd before, the only Subject
of Poetry.

The Poet conducts the *Portuguese* Fleet
to the Mouth of the *Ganges*, round the
Coasts of *Africk*. He takes notice in
the Way, of many Nations who live up-
on the *African* Shore. He interweaves
artfully the History of *Portugal*. The
Simplicity of his Subject, is rais'd by some
Fictions of different Kinds, which I think
not improper to acquaint the Reader
with.

When the Fleet is sailing in sight
of the *Cape of Good-Hope*, call'd then the
Cape of the Storms, a formidable Shape
appears to them, walking in the Depth
of the Sea ; his Head reaches to the
Clouds, the Storms, the Winds, the
Thunders, and the Lightnings hang about
him ; his Arms are extended over the
Waves. 'Tis the Guardian of that fo-
reign Ocean unplough'd before by any
Ship. He complains of his being oblig'd
to submit to Fate, and to the audacious
Undertaking of the *Portuguese*, and fore-
tells them all the Misfortunes which they
must undergo in the *Indies*.

I believe, that such a Fiction would
be thought noble and proper, in all Ages,
and in all Nations.

There

There is another, which perhaps would have pleas'd the *Italians* as well as the *Portuguese*, but no other Nation besides: It is an enchanted Island, call'd the Island of Bliss, which the Fleet finds in her Way home, just rising from the Sea, for their Comfort and for their Reward: *Camouens* describes that Place, as *Tasso* did some Years after, his Island of *Armida*. There a supernatural Power brings in all the Beauties, and presents all the Pleasures which Nature can afford, and which the Heart may wish for; a Goddess enamour'd with *Valesco de Gama*, carries him to the Top of an high Mountain, from whence she shows him all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and foretels the Fate of *Portugal*.

After *Camouens* hath given a loose to his Fancy, in the lascivious Description of the Pleasures which *Gama* and his Crew enjoy'd in the Island, he takes care to inform the Reader, that he ought to understand by this Fiction, nothing but the Satisfaction which the virtuous Man feels, and the Glory which accrues to him by the Practice of Virtue; but the best Excuse for such an Invention, is, the charming Stile in which it is deliver'd, (if we believe the *Portuguese*;) for the Beauty of the Elocution makes sometimes amends for the Faults of the Poet, as the Colouring
of

of *Rubens* makes some Defects in his Figures pass unregarded.

There is *another* Kind of *Machinery* continued throughout all the Poem, which nothing can excuse, in any Country whatever; 'tis an injudicious Mixture of the Heathen Gods with our Religion. *Gama* in a Storm addresses his Prayers to *Christ*, but 'tis *Venus* who comes to his Relief; the Heroes are *Christians*, and the Poet *Heathen*. The main Design which the *Portuguese* are suppos'd to have, (next to the promoting of their Trade) is to propagate *Christianity*; yet *Jupiter*, *Bacchus*, and *Venus*, have in their hands, all the Management of the Voyage. So incongruous a *Machinery*, casts a Blemish upon the whole Poem; yet shows at the same time, how prevailing are its Beauties, since the *Portuguese* like it with all its Faults.

Camouens hath a great deal of true Wit, and not a little Share of false; his Imagination hurries him into great Absurdities.

I remember, that after *Velasco de Gama* hath related his Adventures to the King of *Melinda*, now, says he, O King, judge if *Ulysses*, and *Aeneas*, have travell'd so far, and undergone so many Hardships.

ships. As if that barbarous *African*, was acquainted with *Homer* and *Virgil*.

His Poem, in my Opinion, is full of numberless Faults and Beauties, thick sown near one another; and almost in every Page, there is what to laugh at, and what to be delighted with. Among his most lucky Thoughts, I must take notice of two, for the Likeness which they bear to two most celebrated Passages of *Waller* and *Sir John Denham*.

Waller says, in his Epistle to *Zelinda*;

*Thy matchless Form will Credit bring,
To all the Wonders I can sing.*

Camouens says, in speaking of the Voyages of the *Argonauts*, and of *Ulysses*, that the Undertaking of the *Portuguese* shall give Credit to all those Fables, in surpassing them.

Sir John Denham, in his Poem on *Coo-pers-Hill*, says to the *Thames*;

*O could I flow like thee, and make thy Stream
My great Example, as it is my Theme;
Tho' deep, yet clear; tho' gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without Rage, without o'erflowing full.*

Camouens addresses the Nymphs of *Tagus* in the like manner; "O Nymphs,
" if ever I sung of you, inspire me now
" with

" with new and strong Lays; let my
 " Stile flow like your Waves; let it be
 " deep and clear, as your Waters, &c."

It is not to be inferr'd from thence,
 that *Waller* and *Sir John Denham* have
 imitated *Camouens*; we must only con-
 clude, that Wit is of the Growth of every
 Country. It is very unjust, and very com-
 mon, to call Plagiarism what is but Re-
 semblance.

T A S S O.

TORQUATO *Tasso* began his *Jeru-
 salem*, when *Camouens* was finishing
 his *Lusiada*. He us'd to say, that the only
 Rival he fear'd in *Europe* was *Camouens*.
 His Fear (if sincere) was very ill-ground-
 ed; for he was as far superior to him, as
 that *Portuguese* excell'd the Poets of his
 own Country.

No Man in the World was ever born
 with a greater Genius, and more quali-
 fy'd for *Epick* Poetry. His Talents which
 gain'd him so great a Reputation, were
 the Cause of his Misfortunes. His Life
 prov'd a Chain of Miseries and Woes.
 Banish'd from his own Country, he was
 reduc'd to the grievous Necessity of having
 a Patron. He suffer'd Want, Exile, and
 Prison; and which is more intolerable, he
 was oppress'd by Calumny.

Even

Even his poetical Glory, that chimerical Comfort in real Calamities, was contested. The Number of his Enemies eclips'd for a long while his Reputation: And at last when his Merit began to overcome Envy, when he was ready to receive the Honour of Triumph in *Rome*, which *Petrarch* had formerly enjoy'd (though with less Merit) and which was at that time as glorious as it is now ridiculous; he died the very Day before the design'd Solemnity.

Nothing discovers more plainly the high Sense which *Rome* entertain'd of his Merit, than the Inscription on his Tomb.

The *Pope*, who order'd him a magnificent Funeral, as if it were to atone for the Misfortunes of his Life, propos'd a Reward for the best Epitaph which should be written in his Honour.

Many were brought to him, all full of the just Praises of *Tasso*. The Judges appointed to chuse the Epitaph, were divided in their Opinions; when a young Man came to them with this Inscription,

Torquati Tassì ossa.

The Judges immediately agreed in giving the Preference to it; being persuaded,

ded, that the Name of *Tasso* was his greatest Encomium.

Time, which undermines the Reputation of indifferent Authors, hath stamp'd the Character of Immortality upon his Works. His Poem is sung now-a-days in many Parts of *Italy*, as the Poems of *Homer* were in *Greece*; and if the Poets, his Successors, have degenerated from him, if *Italy* is now over-grown with pitiful Sonnets and Conceits; still the Taste of the Nation form'd after his Poems remains in its full force: He is admir'd by the Readers, though not imitated by the Writers. Thus in *France*, *Corneille*, *Racine*, *Boileau*, *la Fontaine*, *Moliere*, will claim for ever the publick Admiration, in defiance to a succeeding Set of Writers, who have introduc'd a new-fangl'd Stile, kept up and cherish'd among themselves, but despis'd by the Nation.

The *Jerusalem Liberata* is in some Parts an Imitation of the *Iliad*. The Subject of *Tasso* is nobler than that of *Homer*, in as much as all *Europe*, rising up in Arms for the Recovery of the Land which is consecrated by the Birth and Blood of their God, strikes the Mind with a more awful Idea, than *Greece* fighting against *Troy*, for *Helena*.

As

As to the Disposition of so great a Work, the impartial Reader may judge if *Tasso* is above, or under his Master, in what he copies from him.

Goffredo acts methinks the Part of *Agamemnon*, with as much Grandeur, less Pride, and more Wisdom.

The Hermit *Piero* is the *Calcas*; and if I dare speak my Opinion, I find nothing very shining nor defective in either.

Rinaldo is among the *Christian* Princes, what *Achilles* is among the *Grecian* Heroes. His Courage is full as boisterous, but his Character more amiable. The Fall of *Jerusalem* is reserv'd to his Sword, as that of *Troy* to the Arms of *Achilles*. The Absence of the one from the Camp, is borrow'd from the Inaction of the other; but certainly *Rinaldo* employs his Leisure more to the Satisfaction of the Reader, than the Hero of *Homer* does.

Aladino, Sultan of *Jerusalem*, is in nothing like *Priam*, but in his being the King of the Town besieg'd; and *Argante* bears no other Resemblance to *Hector*, but in his being the firmest Bulwark of the City.

Certainly the Character of *Hector* is every way above that of *Argante*, and the Grandeur of *Priam* more majestick, and his Misfortunes more touching than those of *Aladino*,

Aladin. I will not decide, if *Homer* hath done right or wrong, in gaining upon our Affections towards *Hector*, and in moving our Pity for *Priam* ; but sure it is, that if *Tasso* had not represented *Aladin* and *Argante* rough and unamiable, if he had not skilfully created an Aversion to them, in the Mind of the Reader, he had defeated his own Intention ; for in that case, instead of being concern'd for the Cause of the *Christian* Princes, we should look upon them as Plunderers, united together to lay waste a foreign Country, and to massacre in cold Blood, an old venerable *Eastern* Monarch, together with his innocent Subjects.

Tasso hath learn'd from *Homer*, the Art of marking the different *Shades* of the same *Colour* ; I mean the different *Kinds* of the same *Virtue*, of distinguishing the *Valiant* from the *Valiant*, and the *Prudent* from the *Prudent*, &c. Thus *Goffredo* is sedate and wise, *Aladin* anxious and cruel. The generous Valour of *Tancrede*, shines in opposition to the brutal Impetuosity of *Argante*. Love in *Armida* is a Mixture of Coquetry and Rage, in *Herminia* a gentle Tenderness. Every one of his Actors is to be known by some distinguishable Mark,

as in the *Iliad*, and every one of them acts always suitable to his Character, which is not always to be found in *Homer*; and in that respect methinks he hath improv'd the Art which *Homer* taught him; but an Art which he learn'd from no body. 'Tis that enchanting Way of interesting us for his Heroes, 'tis that inexpressible Address in interweaving the different Adventures of the Poem, in leading us from the Alarms of Wars to the Allurements of Love, and from Love to War again; in working up our Concern by degrees, and in rising above himself from Book to Book.

As to his Style, it is perspicuous and elegant through all the Poem: and when he enters into Descriptions which require Strength and Majesty, it is wonderful how the natural Effeminacy of the *Italian* Language, soars up into Sublimity and Grandeur, and assumes a new Character in his hands, if we except about an hundred Lines in which he flattens into pitiful Conceits; but I look on these Errors as a kind of Tribute, which his Genius condescended to pay to the *Italian* Taste.

If his Excellencies challenge the unanimous Admiration of *Europe*, there are Faults in him which methinks are censur'd

fur'd every where. The Episode of *Olindo* and *Sophronia* in the beginning of the Action, seems defective in all Respects.

The Poet introduces a *Mahometan* Magician, call'd *Ismeno* ; who, against the strict, and never violated Laws of the *Mahometan* Religion, carries an Image of the Virgin *Mary* into the principal *Mosque*, in order to make it, by the Force of his Enchantments, the Pledge and Security of the Town, as formerly the Fate of *Troy* depended upon the *Palladium*. It happens one Night, that the Image is stolen away, the Christians of *Jerusalem* being suspected of the Theft, the *Sultan* incens'd, sentences them all to Death, that he might be sure to punish the Guilty in the common Slaughter. Mean while *Sophronia*, a pious Christian Virgin, comes before the *Sultan*. She saves her Countrymen by a generous Lye, she declares that she hath stolen the Image. The King condemns her to be burnt. *Olindo* her Lover endeavours to save her Life by another noble Lye ; he takes the Guilt upon himself, and claims the Pile prepar'd for her. At last both are sentenced to die, both are ty'd to the same Stake, when of a sudden arrives *Clorinda* from *Persia*. She, mov'd

F 2

with

with Pity towards them, and looking with Scorn upon the Sorcery of *Ismeno*, asks and obtains their Pardon. *Olindo* and *Sophronia* go from the Pile to their Church, marry, and are no more heard of in the Poem.

cy *Tasso* adorn'd that useless Episode with all the Pomp of Poetry; nay, he is not sparing of *Italian* Conceits in it. He dwells with so much Complacency upon the Description of *Sophronia*, he speaks of the Love of *Olindo* with so much Warmth, he excites so much Pity for them both, that every Reader cannot but believe that both are principal Characters in the Poem. He is amaz'd and angry afterwards to see them as useless to the Affairs of the Christians, as the Image of the Virgin *Mary* to the Infidels. All the Embellishments which *Tasso* lavishes upon such a needless Piece of Enchantment, and upon so preposterous an Episode, serve but to render the Fault more conspicuous.

All the World owns with the *Italians*, that nothing is so artfully describ'd as the Coquetry of *Armida*, nothing so tender as her Love, nothing so animated, and so moving as her Complaints. The Taste of the *English* and of the *French*, tho' averse to any Machinery grounded upon

upon Enchantment, must forgive, nay commend that of *Armida*, since it is the Source of so many Beauties. Besides, she is a *Mahometan*, and the Christian Religion allows us to believe that those Infidels are under the immediate Influence of the Devil.

But indeed no body but an *Italian* can bear with the wild Excess, to which *Tasso* hath carried that Machinery. Ten Christian Princes turn'd into Fish in the Ponds of *Armida*, and a Parrot singing amorous Songs of his own making, are very strange Things in the Eyes of a serious Reader, tho' one is preceded by the Story of *Circe* in *Homer*; and tho' the Parrots are thought among us to mimic now and then human Voices.

Still we should easily forgive such poetical Extravagancies for the sake of the Beauties which are mingled with them. Let the Devils (since they are admitted) have a free Scope to play their wild Pranks, especially in *Italy*, where the Superstition of the People brings Credit to no less strange Tales.

But it is unaccountable, how Men of Sense can approve of the Christian Magicians, who help *Rinaldo* out of the hands of the *Mahometan* Wizards. It is singular, to see in *Tasso* Lewdness, Mass, Confession,

sion, the Litanies of the Saints, and Pieces of Witchcraft heap'd together.

What strange Fancy! to send *Ubaldo* and his Companion to an old *holy Conjuror*, who carries them *just into the Center of the Earth*. The two Knights walk there on the Banks of a Rivulet cover'd with precious Stones of all Kinds. From that Place they are sent to *Ascalon* to an old Woman, who carries them swiftly in a little Ship to the *Canary Islands*. Thither they arrive in the Name of God, holding in their hands a magick Wand, they perform their Ambassy, they carry *Rinaldo* back with them to the Camp of the Christians; for the Army was in need of him. But what was the great Exploit which must necessarily be perform'd by *Rinaldo*, and by him only?

He was destin'd by Providence, and brought by Enchantment from the Pike of *Teneriff* to *Jerusalem*, in order to cut down some Trees in a Forest inhabited by Elves and Hobgoblins. That Forest is the great Machinery of *Tasso*. It is remarkable, that in the former Books God Almighty orders his Arch-angel *Michael* to drive down into Hell the Devils who were let loose in the Air, raising Storms, and managing his Thunders against the Christians, in favour of the *Mahometans*. *Michael* forbids them strictly to meddle
any

any more in those Affairs. They obey, and plunge into Hell immediately ; but soon after the Enchanter *Ismeno* recalls them out, they find Means to elude the Orders of God, and under the pretence of some *Jesuitical* Distinctions, they take Possession of the Forest, wherein the Christians intended to provide the Timber necessary to build a wooden Tower.

There they assume innumerable Shapes, to frighten away those who come to cut the Trees. There *Tancred* finds his *Clorinda*, after her Death, shut up in a Pine, and bleeding for the Blow, which he strikes at the Root. There *Armida* peeps out of a Myrtle, while she is some Miles off, in the *Ægyptian* Army, and totally unappris'd of her being in two Places at once, tho' she is the best Sorceress in the World. At last the Prayers of the *Hermit*, and the Merit of *Rinaldo's* Contrition, after his Confession, break the Enchantment.

Methinks it is not very foreign to the Purpose, to see how differently *Lucan* hath handled, in his *Pharsalia*, a Topick pretty much of the same nature. 'Tis when *Cæsar* orders his Troops to cut down some Trees in the Sacred Forest of *Mar-seilles*, to have them made into warlike Instruments. The Passage deserves to be

set in its full Length, as it is translated by
the late Mr. Rowe.

Not far away, for Ages past had stood
An old inviolated sacred Wood;
Whose gloomy Boughs, thick interwoven, made
A chilly, chearless, everlasting Shade;
There, nor the rustick Gods, nor Satyrs sport;
Nor Fawns and Sylvans with the Nymphs resort:
But barb'rous Priests some dreadful Pow'r adore,
And lustrate ev'ry Tree with human Gore.
If Mysteries, in Times of old receiv'd,
And pious Ancientry be yet believ'd,
There nor the feather'd Songster builds her Nest,
Nor lonely Dens conceal the savage Beast:
There no tempestuous Winds presume to fly,
Ev'n Lightnings glance aloof, and shoot obliquely by;
No wanton Breezes tofs the dancing Leaves,
But shiv'ring Horror in the Branches heaves.
Black Springs with pitchy Streams divide the Ground,
And bubbling tumble with a sullen Sound.
Old Images of Forms mis-shapen stand,
Rude and unknowing of the Artist's Hand;
With hoary Filth begrim'd, each ghastly Head
Strikes the astonish'd Gazer's Soul with Dread.
No Gods, who long in common Shapes appear'd,
Were e'er with such Religious Awe rever'd:
But zealous Crouds in Ignorance adore;
And still the less they know, they fear the more.

The pious Worshippers approach not near,
But shun their Gods, and kneel with distant Fear:
The Priest himself, when, or the Day, or Night,
Rowling have reach'd their full meridian Height,
Refrains the gloomy Paths with wary Feet,
Dreading the Dæmon of the Grove to meet;

*Who, terrible to Sight, at that fix'd Hour,
Still treads the Ground about his dreary Bow'r.*

*This Wood near neighb'ring to th' encompass'd Town,
Untouch'd by former Wars remain'd alone;
And since the Country round it naked stands,
From hence the Latian Chief Supplies demands.
But lo! the bolder Hands, that should have struck,
With some unusual Horror trembling shook;
With silent Dread and Rev'rence they survey'd
The Gloom Majestick of the sacred Shade:
None dares with impious Steel the Bark to rend,
Lest on himself the destin'd Stroke descend.
Cæsar perceiv'd the spreading Fear to grow,
Then eager, caught an Ax, and aim'd a Blow:
Deep sunk within a violated Oak
The wounding Edge, and thus the Warrior spoke:
Now, let no doubting Hand the Task decline;
Cut you the Wood, and let the Guilt be mine.
The trembling Bands unwillingly obey'd;
Two various Ills were in the Ballance laid,
And Cæsar's Wrath against the Gods was weigh'd.*

I confess that the whole *Pharsalia* is not to be compar'd to the *Jerusalem* of *Tasso*. But at least that particular Passage shows how the true Grandeur of a real Hero is above the *Romantick*, and how solid and strong Thoughts excel those Inventions, which the Crowd calls poetical Beauties, and on which wise Men look down as Tales fit for Children.

The *Virtuosi* in *Italy* have disputed for a long while, and still contest which of the two, *Ariosto* or *Tasso*, deserves the Precedency. But every where else the chiefest
Exception

Exception that Men of Understanding take to *Tasso*, is that of having too much of *Ariosto* in him. *Tasso* seems to have been conscious of this Fault. He could not be unsensible that such wild Fairy Tales, at that time so much in Fashion, not in *Italy* only, but in all *Europe*, were altogether inconsistent with the Gravity of *Epick* Poetry: In order to cover this Defect, he printed a Preface, in which he pretends that all his Poem is but a Shadow and a Type.

The Army of the Christian Princes, says he, represents the Body and the Soul. *Jerusalem* the Figure of true Happiness, which cannot be obtain'd but by Labour and Difficulties. *Goffredo* is the Mind, *Tancredo*, *Raimondo*, &c. are the Faculties of the Mind. The common Soldiers make up the Limbs of the Body. The Devils are at once figur'd, and Figures (*figura è figurato.*) *Armida* and *Ismeno* are the Temptations which besiege our Souls. The Spells and the Illusions of the enchanted Forest shadow out the false Reasoning (*falsi Syllogismi*) into which our Passions are apt to mislead us.

Such is the Key that *Tasso* thinks fit to give us of his Works. He deals with himself, as the Commentators have done with *Homer* and *Virgil*. Those Gentlemen are like

like speculative and dully wise Politicians, who construe the most insignificant Actions of great Men, into Designs of the greatest Depth and Importance. But *Tasso* was like that Ambassador, who having spent all the Time of his Embassy in Debauchery and Riot, wrote to his Master that he was whoring and drinking for the Service of his Majesty.

However, the ridiculous Explanation which *Tasso* gives with so much Gravity of his Extravagancies, cannot impose upon Mankind; for we no more allow an Author to comment upon himself, than a Priest to prophesy of himself.

If the Devils act in *Tasso* the insipid part of despicable Jugglers; on the other hand, what is relating to Religion, is writ with Majesty, and I dare say in the Spirit of Religion itself. Nay, Processions and Litanies, and all the Parts of *Popish* Religion, which are accounted comical and mean in *England*, appear in a reverend Awefulness in that Poem. So prevalent is the Art of Poetry when it exerts itself in its full force, and so peculiar to it is the Power of raising what is low, and of enlarging the Sphere of all Things!

He is guilty of indulging the inaccurate Custom of calling the Evil Spirits by the Names of *Pluto*, *Alecto*, and of mingling
often

often *Pagan* Ideas with *Christian* Mythology. 'Tis strange that none of the modern Poets are free from that Fault. It seems that our Devils and our Christian Hell, have something in them low and mean, and must be rais'd by the Hell of the *Pagans*, which owes its Dignity to its Antiquity. Certain it is, that the Hell of the Gospel is not so fitted for Poetry as that of *Homer* and *Virgil*. The Name of *Tisiphone* sounds better than that of *Beelzebub*; but with all that, it is as preposterous in a Poet to bring *Michael* and *Aleto* together, as in some *Italian* and *Flemish* Painters to have represented the Virgin *Mary* with a Chapelet of Beads hanging at her Girdle, to have plac'd some *Swiss* Guards at the Door of the Apartment of *Pharaoh*, and to have mix'd Cannons and Carabines with the ancient Arrows in the Battle of *Joshuah*.

Don Alonzo d'Ereilla y Cuniga.

AT the End of the sixteenth Century, *Spain* produc'd an *Epick* Poem, famous for some peculiar Beauties that shine in it, as well as for the Singularity of its Subject, but still more illustrious by the Character of the Author.

Alonzo

Alonzo of Ereilla y Cuniga, Gentleman of the Bed-Chamber to the Emperor *Maximilian*, was bred up in the House of *Philip* the second, and fought under his Orders, at the Battle of *St. Quintin*, where the *French* were utterly defeated.

Philip, after such a Success, being less desirous to augment his Glory abroad, than to settle his Affairs at home, went back to *Spain*. The young *Alonzo* of *Ereilla*, led by an insatiable Avidity of true Learning, (I mean of knowing Men, and of seeing the World) travell'd through all *France*, saw *Italy*, *Germany*, and stay'd a long while in *England*. Whilst he was in *London*, he heard some Provinces of *Peru* and *Chily* had taken Arms against the *Spaniards*, their Conquerors; which Struggle for their Liberty, is, by the by, still'd Rebellion by the *Spanish* Authors. His Thirst of Glory, and his eager Desire of seeing and doing new and singular Things, carry'd him, without any hesitation or delay, into those Countries. He went to *Chily*, at the head of a few Troops, and he stay'd in these Parts all the time of the War.

Near the Borders of *Chily*, towards the South, lies a small mountainous Country, call'd *Araucana*, inhabited by a Race of Men, stronger and more fierce, than all the Nations of that new World. They fought

fought for their Liberty, longer than the other *Americans*, and were the last who were subdu'd. *Alonzo* waged against them a toilsome and dangerous War, underwent inexpressible Hardships, saw and achiev'd the most surprising Deeds, the Prize whereof was only the Honour of reducing some Rocks and barren Countries, in another Hemisphere, to the Crown of *Spain*.

Alonzo, in the Course of that War, conceiv'd the Idea to immortalize his Enemies and himself, he was at once the Conqueror and the Poet. He made use of the Intervals of the War to sing it, and as he wanted Paper, he wrote the first Part of his Poem upon little Pieces of Leather, which afterwards he had much ado to set right, and to bring together. The Poem is called the *Araucana*, from the Name of the Country.

It begins with a geographical Account of *Chily*, and with a Description of the Manners and Customs of the People; such a beginning, which would be quite flat and intolerable in any other Poem, is necessary and not unpleasant in a Subject where the Scene lies under the other Tropic, and where the Heroes he writes of, are barbarous *Americans*, who must have been

been for ever unknown, if he had not conquer'd and celebrated them.

As the Subject was quite new, so it gave birth to new Thoughts. There is one which I present to the Readers, both as an Example of Novelty, and as a Spark of the Fire which animated sometimes the Author.

“ The *Araucani*, says he, were surpris'd
 “ at first, to see Creatures like Men, with
 “ Fire in their Hands, and dreadful Mon-
 “ sters fighting under them. They thought
 “ they were the immortal Gods, descend-
 “ ing from above, with Thunder and De-
 “ struction. They submitted, though with
 “ Reluctance; but afterwards being more
 “ acquainted with their Conquerors, they
 “ saw their Vices, and judg'd they were
 “ Men; then on a sudden, asham'd of be-
 “ ing oppress'd by their Fellow-Mortals,
 “ they swore by their Shame, to wash off
 “ their Error with the Blood of the Decei-
 “ vers, and to execute a Vengeance exem-
 “ plary, dreadful, and irrevocable.”

It will be useful perhaps, to take notice of a Passage in the second Book, which bears a near Resemblance to the Beginning of the *Iliad*, and which being handled quite differently, deserves to be presented to the little Number of impartial Readers, that they may judge between *Homer* and *Alonzo* in that particular.

lar. The first Action of the *Araucana*, is a Quarrel which happen'd between all the barbarous Chiefs, as in *Homer* between *Achilles* and *Agamemnon*. The Dispute was not about a Woman, but about the Right of commanding the Army. Every one of those savage Warriors assumes an uncontroll'd Behaviour upon the Consciousness of his own Worth; and at last the Dispute grew so high, that they were ready to fight one against another, when one of the *Casiques* call'd *Colocolo*, as old as *Nestor*, and less boasting of himself than the *Grecian*, made the following Speech:

“ *Casiques*, ye illustrious Defenders
 “ of our Country, the vain Desire of
 “ Empire does not move me to speak
 “ to you. I do not complain that you
 “ all contend so eagerly for an Honour
 “ which perhaps is due to my old Age,
 “ and should adorn my Decline. 'Tis
 “ my Love to you, 'tis the Duty that I
 “ owe to my Country, which forces me
 “ to intreat you to attend to my feeble
 “ Voice. Alas! How can we be so as-
 “ suming, as to pretend to any Gran-
 “ deur whatever, and to claim honoura-
 “ ble Titles; we, who have been Sub-
 “ jects, nay, miserable Slaves, to the
 “ *Spaniards*? Your Anger, *Casiques*,
 “ your Fury, would be better employ'd
 “ against

“ against our Tyrants ; why do you turn
 “ against your Breasts, those Arms which
 “ might exterminate your Enemies, and
 “ revenge our World ? Ah ! if Death
 “ be your Desire, seek a Death that is
 “ honourable ! Shake off the shameful
 “ Yoke with one Hand, assault the *Spaniards*
 “ with the other, and shed not
 “ in an unprofitable Quarrel, those last
 “ Drops of Blood of this State, which
 “ the Gods have left in it for its Re-
 “ venge. I am not displeas’d, I confess,
 “ to see the undaunted Haughtiness of
 “ your Courages. This very Fierceness
 “ which I blame, heightens the Hopes
 “ I conceive of our Designs ; but let not
 “ your ill-govern’d Valour prey upon
 “ itself, and destroy with its own Force,
 “ the Country you rise to defend. If
 “ you persist in your Quarrels, let your
 “ Swords first be imbru’d in my Blood,
 “ already frozen with old Age. I have
 “ liv’d too long. Happy is he who dies
 “ before his Countrymen are unfortu-
 “ nate, and unfortunate by their own
 “ Fault. Attend then to what I dare
 “ propose for your Welfare. Your Va-
 “ lour, O Casiques, is equal ; you are
 “ all equally illustrious by the Honours
 “ of the War, by your Birth, by your
 “ Power and Riches ; your Souls are
 “ noble in an equal Degree, all worthy

“ to command, and able to subdue our
 “ World. Those Heavenly Gifts are
 “ the present Subject of your great Con-
 “ tests, you want a Chief, and every
 “ one of you is equal to that noble
 “ Charge ; then since there is no Dif-
 “ ference between your Courages, let
 “ the Strength of the Body decide what
 “ the Equality of your Virtues would
 “ keep undecided for ever, &c.”

Then that old Man proposes a Game,
 fit only for a barbarous Nation, and con-
 sequently very proper. It was to carry
 a ponderous Beam, and he who could
 sustain the Weight longest, was to be
 the Chief.

Now since the best Way of improving
 our Taste, is that of comparing together
 Things of the same nature, let us bring
 in the Discourse of *Nestor*, in opposition
 to this of *Colocolo*, and laying aside that
 Worship, which our Minds justly pre-
 judiced, pay to the great Name of *Homer*,
 let the Reader weigh the two Speeches in
 the Ballance of Equity and Reason.

As soon as *Achilles* warn'd and in-
 spir'd by *Minerva*, the Goddess of Wis-
 dom, has call'd *Agamemnon* Drunkard,
 Dog, and Stag, the wise *Nestor* arose to
 calm the ruffled Minds of those Heroes ;
 and among other Things which I
 wave, to come closely to the Point of
 Com-

Comparison, thus he said; "What a Satisfaction will it be to the *Trojans*,
 "when they hear of your Dissensions!
 "Young Men, you must respect my
 "Years, and submit to my Wisdom; I
 "have liv'd in my Youth with Heroes,
 "by far superior to you; no, my Eyes
 "will never see such Men, as the un-
 "daunted *Pirithous*, the bold *Ceneus*, the
 "divine *Theseus*, &c. I went to war
 "with them, and though younger, I
 "sway'd their Strength by my persua-
 "sive Eloquence; they listned to, they
 "obey'd *Nestor*. If in my early Years
 "they deem'd me so wise; you, young
 "Warriors, attend to the Advice of
 "my old Age. *Atrides*, do not seize on
 "the Slave of *Achilles*; you Son of *The-*
 "*tis*, do not treat our Prince with
 "Pride. *Achilles* is the greatest, the most
 "courageous of the Warriors, *Agamemnon*
 "is the greatest of Kings, &c." Thus
 spoke the wise *Nestor*, and his Speech
 prov'd entirely ineffectual, for *Agamemnon*
 commended his Eloquence, and neglected
 the Advice.

Let the Readers consider on one part,
 the Endearments by which the barbarous
Colocolo ingratiates himself into the
 Favour of the *Casiques*, the awful Ma-
 jesty with which he checks their Animo-
 sity, the Tendernefs with which he sof-

tens their Boisterousness, how the Love of his Country animates him, how the true Sense of Glory enlivens his Speech, in what a prudent manner he praises their Valour, when he curbs their Fury; with what Art, he gives Superiority to none, and is at the same time an in-offensive Censor, and a noble Panegyrist: So that all submit to his Reason, and comply with his Advice, confessing the Force of his Eloquence, not by empty Commendations, but by a sudden Obedience.

On the other side, one may judge, if *Nestor* is so wise in talking so much of his Wisdom, if it is a good Way to reconcile the Attention of the *Greek* Princes, by telling them that they are by far inferior to their Fore-fathers; if to say to *Agamemnon*, that *Achilles* is the most valourous of the present Chiefs, ought to be very acceptable to *Agamemnon*; and after having compar'd the haughty Talkativeness of *Nestor*, with the modest Eloquence of *Colocolo*; the Injury offered by one to all the *Greeks*, by the offensive Superiority ascrib'd to their Predecessors, with the engaging Praises bestow'd upon the Casiques then present: The odious Comparison between the Power of *Agamemnon*, and the Valour of *Achilles*; with that equal Share of Grandeur and
Cou-

Courage, artfully extoll'd in all the Ca-
 fiques : Then let the Reader pronounce.
 And if there is a General in the World,
 who would hear his Inferior preferr'd to
 him in point of Courage ; if there is any
 Assembly who would bear without Re-
 sentment, a Speaker talking to them with
 Contempt, and villifying them, by ex-
 tolling at their Expence their Predecef-
 fors ; let then *Homer* be preferr'd to *Alon-*
zo in that Particular.

It is true, that if *Alonzo* is above *Homer*
 in this Point, he is in all the rest inferior to
 the meanest of the Poets. It is wonderful,
 how he falls so low from so high a Flight.
 There is undoubtedly a great deal of Fire
 in his Battles, but no Design, no Invention,
 no Variety in the Descriptions, no Uni-
 ty in the whole Frame ; the Poem is
 more wild, than the Nations who are
 the Subject of it. In the latter End of
 the Work, *Alonzo*, who is one of the
 chief Actors in the Poem, makes a long
 and tedious March with some Soldiers
 by Night ; and to divert the Time, he
 raises a Dispute between them about *Vir-*
gil, and chiefly on the Episode of *Dido*.
Alonzo takes his Opportunity, in the
 Conversation, of relating the History of
Dido, as it is reported by some antient
 Authors ; and in order to give the Lye
 to *Virgil*, and to restore *Dido* to her for-

mer Glory, he spends two long Canto's in descanting upon her.

One of the greatest Exceptions besides, which may be taken against it, is, that the Book consists of thirty-six long Canto's. The Reader will think it probable, that a Man who does not know how to stop, is not qualified to run such a Career.

So many Defects have not deterred the celebrated *Michael Cervantes* from writing, that the *Araucana* may cope with the best Authors of *Italy*.

The Judgment of *Cervantes* was mis-led in that Point by an over-weaning Inclination towards his Countrymen. The true Love of our Country is to do good to it, to contribute to its Liberty, as far as it lies in our power ; but to contend only for the Superiority of our Authors, to boast of having among us better Poets than our Neighbours, is rather Self-love than Patriotism.

M I L T O N.

MILTON is the last in *Europe* who wrote an *Epick* Poem ; for I wave all those whose Attempts have been unsuccessful, my Intention being not to descant on the many who have contended for the Prize, but to speak only of the very

very few who have gain'd it in their respective Countries.

Milton, as he was travelling through *Italy* in his Youth, saw at *Florence* a Comedy call'd *Adamo*, writ by one *Andreino* a Player, and dedicated to *Mary de Medicis* Queen of *France*. The Subject of the Play was the *Fall of Man*; the Actors, God, the Devils, the Angels, *Adam*, *Eve*, the Serpent, Death, and the seven mortal Sins. That Topick so improper for a Drama, but so suitable to the absurd Genius of the *Italian* Stage, (as it was at that time) was handled in a manner intirely conformable to the Extravagance of the Design. The Scene opens with a Chorus of Angels, and a Cherubim thus speaks for the rest: " Let the Rainbow be the
" Fiddlestick of the Fiddle of the Hea-
" vens, let the Planets be the Notes of
" our Musick, let Time beat carefully the
" Measure, and the Winds make the
" Sharps, &c." Thus the Play begins, and every Scene rises above the first in Profusion of Impertinence.

Milton pierc'd through the Absurdity of that Performance to the hidden Majesty of the Subject, which being altogether unfit for the Stage, yet might be (for the Genius of *Milton*, and for his only) the Foundation of an *Epick* Poem.

He took from that ridiculous Trifle the first Hint of the noblest Work, which human Imagination hath ever attempted, and which he executed more than twenty Years after.

In the like manner, *Pythagoras* ow'd the Invention of Musick to the Noise of the Hammer of a Blacksmith. And thus in our Days, Sir *Isaac Newton* walking in his Gardens, had the first Thought of his System of Gravitation, upon seeing an Apple falling from a Tree.

If the Difference of Genius between Nation and Nation, ever appear'd in its full Light, 'tis in *Milton's Paradise Lost*.

The *French* answer with a scornful Smile, when they are told there is in *England* an *Epick Poem*, the Subject whereof is the Devil fighting against God, and *Adam* and *Eve* eating an Apple at the Persuasion of a Snake. As that 'Topick hath afforded nothing among them, but some lively Lampoons, for which that Nation is so famous; they cannot imagine it possible to build an *Epick Poem* upon the Subject of their Ballads. And indeed such an Error ought to be excused; for if we consider with what Freedom the politest Part of Mankind throughout all *Europe*, both Catholics and Protestants, are wont to ridicule in Conversation those consecrated

Histo-

Histories ; nay, if those who have the highest Respect for the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, and who are struck with Awe at some Parts of it, yet cannot forbear now and then making free with the *Devil*, the *Serpent*, the Frailty of our first Parents, the Rib which *Adam* was robb'd of, and the like ; it seems a very hard Task for a profane Poet to endeavour to remove those Shadows of Ridicule, to reconcile together what is divine, and what looks absurd, and to command a Respect that the Sacred Writers could hardly obtain from our frivolous Minds.

What *Milton* so boldly undertook, he perform'd with a superior Strength of Judgment, and with an Imagination productive of Beauties not dream'd of before him. The Meanness (if there is any) of some Parts of the Subject, is lost in the Immensity of the poetical Invention. There is something above the reach of human Forces to have attempted the Creation without Bombast, to have describ'd the Gluttony and Curiosity of a Woman without Flatness, to have brought Probability and Reason amidst the hurry of imaginary Things belonging to another World, and as far remote from the Limits of our Notions, as they are from our Earth ; in short, to force the Reader to say,

say, " If God, if the Angels, if Satan
 " would speak, I believe they would
 " speak as they do in *Milton*."

I have often admir'd how barren the
 Subject appears, and how fruitful it grows
 under his hands.

The *Paradise Lost*, is the only Poem
 wherein are to be found, in a perfect de-
 gree, that Uniformity which satisfies the
 Mind, and that Variety which pleases the
 Imagination: All its Episodes being ne-
 cessary Lines, which aim at the Centre of
 a perfect Circle. Where is the Nation
 who would not be pleas'd with the Inter-
 view of *Adam* and the *Angel*? With the
 Mountain of Vision, with the bold Strokes
 which make up the relentless, undaunted,
 and sly Character of Satan? But above
 all, with that sublime Wisdom which
Milton exerts, whenever he dares to de-
 scribe God, and to make him speak? He
 seems indeed to draw the Picture of the
 Almighty as like as Human Nature can
 reach to, through the mortal Dust in
 which we are clouded.

The *Heathens* always, the *Jews* often,
 and our Christian Priests sometimes, re-
 present God as a Tyrant infinitely power-
 ful. But the God of *Milton* is always a
 Creator, a Father, and a Judge; nor is
 his Vengeance jarring with his Mercy,
 nor

nor his Predeterminations repugnant to the Liberty of Man. These are the Pictures which lift up indeed the Soul of the Reader. *Milton* in that Point, as well as in many others, is as far above the ancient Poets, as the Christian Religion is above the *Heathen Fables*.

But he hath especially an indisputable Claim to the unanimous Admiration of Mankind, when he descends from those high Flights to the natural Description of human Things. It is observable, that in all other Poems, Love is represented as a Vice, in *Milton* only 'tis a Virtue. The Pictures he draws of it, are naked as the Persons he speaks of, and as venerable. He removes with a chaste hand, the Veil which covers every where else the Enjoyments of that Passion. There is Softness, Tendernefs, and Warmth, without Lasciviousness; the Poet transports himself and us into that State of innocent Happiness, in which *Adam* and *Eve* continued for a short time. He soars not above human, but above corrupt Nature; and as there is no Instance of such Love, there is none of such Poetry.

How then it came to pass that the *Paradise Lost* had been so long neglected, (nay, almost unknown) in *England*, (till the Lord *Sommers*, in some measure, taught
Mankind

Mankind to admire it) is a Thing which I cannot reconcile, *neither* with the Temper, *nor* with the Genius of the *English* Nation.

The Duke of *Buckingham* in his *Art of Poetry* gives the Preference to *Spencer*. It is reported in the Life of the Lord *Rochester*, that he had no Notion of a better Poet than *Cowley*.

Mr. *Dryden's* Judgment on *Milton* is still more unaccountable. He hath bestow'd some Verses upon him, in which he puts him upon a Level with, nay above *Virgil* and *Homer* ;

*The Force of Nature could no further go ;
To make a third, she join'd the former two.*

The same Mr. *Dryden*, in his Preface upon his Translation of the *Æneid*, ranks *Milton* with *Chapellain*, and *Lemoine*, the most impertinent Poets who ever scribbled. How he could extol him so much in his Verses, and debase him so low in his Prose, is a Riddle, which, being a Foreigner, I cannot understand.

In short, one would be apt to think, that *Milton* had not obtained his true Reputation, till Mr. *Addison*, the best Critick, as well as the best Writer of his Age, pointed out the most hidden Beauties of the *Paradise Lost* ; and settled for ever its Reputation.

It is an easy and a pleasant Task to take notice of the many Beauties of *Milton*, which I call universal : But 'tis a ticklish Undertaking, to point out what would be reputed a Fault in any other Country.

I am very far from Thinking, that one Nation ought to judge of its Productions by the Standard of another ; nor do I presume, that the *French* (for Example) who have no *Epick* Poets, have any Right to give Laws on *Epick* Poetry.

But I fancy many *English* Readers, who are acquainted with the *French* Language, will not be displeas'd to have some Notion of the Taste of that Country : And I hope they are too just either to submit to it, or despise it barely upon the score of its being foreign to them.

Would each Nation attend a little more than they do, to the Taste and the Manners of their respective Neighbours, perhaps a general good Taste might diffuse itself through all *Europe* from such an Intercourse of Learning, and from that useful Exchange of Observations. The *English* Stage, for Example, might be clear'd of mangled Carcasses, and the Style of their tragick Authors come down from their forced Metaphorical Bombast, to a nearer Imitation of Nature. The *French* would learn from the *English* to animate their Tragedies with more
Ac-

Action, and would contract now and then their long Speeches into shorter and warmer Sentiments.

The *Spaniards* would introduce in their Plays more Pictures of human Life, more Characters and Manners, and not puzzle themselves always in the Entanglements of confus'd Adventures, more romantick than natural. The *Italian* in point of Tragedy, would catch the Flame from the *English*, and all the rest from the *French*. In point of Comedy, they would learn from Mr. *Congreve* and some other Authors, to prefer Wit and Humour to Buffoonery.

To proceed in that View; I'll venture to say, that none of the *French* Criticks could like the Excursions which *Milton* makes sometimes beyond the strict Limits of his Subject. They lay down for a Rule, that an Author himself ought never to appear in his Poem, and his own Thoughts, his own Sentiments, must be spoken by the Actors he introduces. Many judicious Men in *England* comply with that Opinion, and Mr. *Addison* favours it. I beg leave in this place to hazard a Reflection of my own, which I submit to the Reader's Judgment.

Milton breaks the Thread of his Narration in two Manners. The first consists of two or three kinds of Prologues, which

which he premises at the beginning of some Books. In one place he expatiates upon his own Blindness; in another he compares his Subject, and prefers it to that of the *Iliad*, and to the common Topics of War, which were thought before him the only Subject fit for *Epick* Poetry; and he adds, that he hopes to soar as high as all his Predecessors, unless the cold Climate of *England* damps his *Wings*.

His other way of interrupting his Narration, is by some Observations which he intersperses now and then upon some great Incident, or some interesting Circumstance. Of that kind is his Digression on Love, in the fourth Book:

*Whatever Hypocrites austere*ly talk,
Defaming as impure, what God declares
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all;
Our Maker bids increase, who bids abstain
But our Destroyer, Foe to God and Men?
Hail wedded Love, &c.

As to the first of these two Heads, I cannot but own that an Author is generally guilty of an unpardonable Self-love, when he lays aside his Subject to descant on his own Person: but that human Frailty is to be forgiven in *Milton*; nay, I am pleas'd with it. He gratifies the Curiosity it raises in me about his Person; when I admire the Author, I desire
to

to know something of the Man ; and he whom all Readers would be glad to know, is allow'd to speak of himself. But this however is a very dangerous Example for a Genius of an inferior Order, and is only to be justified by Success.

As to the second Point, I am so far from looking on that Liberty as a Fault, that I think it to be a great Beauty. For if Morality is the Aim of Poetry, I do not apprehend why the Poet should be forbidden to intersperse his Descriptions with moral Sentences and useful Reflections, provided he scatters them with a sparing hand, and in proper places, either when he wants Personages to utter those Thoughts, or when their Character does not permit them to speak in the behalf of Virtue.

'Tis strange that *Homer* is commended by the Criticks for his comparing *Ajax* to an *Afs* pelted away with Stones by some Children, *Ulysses* to a Pudding, the Council-board of *Priam* to Grasshoppers : 'Tis strange, I say, that they defend so clamorously those Similes, tho' never so foreign to the purpose, and will not allow the natural Reflections, the noble Digressions of *Milton*, tho' never so closely link'd to the Subject.

I will not dwell upon some small Errors of *Milton*, which are obvious to every Reader ;

Reader ; I mean some few Contradictions, and those frequent Glances at the *Heathen Mythology* : which Fault, by the by, is so much the more inexcusable in him, by his having premis'd in his first Book, that those Divinities were but Devils worshipp'd under different Names, which ought to have been a sufficient Caution to him not to speak of the Rape of *Proserpine*, of the Wedding of *Juno* and *Jupiter*, &c. as Matters of Fact.

I lay aside likewise his preposterous and aukward Jests, his Puns, his too familiar Expressions, so inconsistent with the Elevation of his Genius, and of his Subject.

To come to more essential Points and more *liable* to be debated : I dare affirm, that the Contrivance of the *Pandæmonium* would have been entirely disapprov'd of by Criticks like *Boileau*, *Racine*, &c.

That Seat built for the Parliament of the Devils, seems very preposterous : Since *Satan* hath summon'd them altogether, and harangu'd them just before in an ample Field. The Council was necessary ; but where it was to be held, 'twas very indifferent. The Poet seems to delight in Building his *Pandæmonium* in *Doric Order* with Freeze and Cornice, and a Roof of Gold. Such a Contrivance favours more of the wild Fancy of our Father *le Moine*, than of the se-

rious Spirit of *Milton*. But when afterwards the Devils turn Dwarfs to fill their Places in the House, as if it was impracticable to build a Room large enough to contain them in their natural Size ; it is an idle Story, which would match the most extravagant Tales. And to crown all, Satan, and the chief Lords preserving their own monstrous Forms, while the Rabble of the Devils shrink into Pigmies, heightens the Ridicule of the whole Contrivance to an unexpressible degree. Methinks the true Criterion for discerning what is really ridiculous in an *Epick* Poem, is to examine if the same thing would not fit exactly the Mock-Heroick. Then I dare say that nothing is so adapted to that ludicrous way of Writing, as the *Metamorphosis* of the Devils into Dwarfs.

The Fiction of *Death* and *Sin*, seems to have in it some great Beauties, and many gross Defects. In order to canvass this Matter with Order, we must first lay down, that such shadowy Beings, as *Death*, *Sin*, *Chaos*, are intolerable, when they are not allegorical. For Fiction is nothing but Truth in Disguise. It must be granted too, that an Allegory must be short, decent, and noble. For an Allegory carried too far or too low, is like a beautiful Woman who wears always a
Mask.

Mask. An Allegory is a long Metaphor ; and to speak too long in Metaphors must be tiresome, because unnatural. This being premis'd, I must say, that in general those Fictions, those imaginary Beings, are more agreeable to the Nature of *Milton's* Poem, than to any other ; because he hath but two natural Persons for his Actors, I mean *Adam* and *Eve*. A great part of the Action lies in imaginary Worlds, and must of course admit of imaginary Beings.

Then *Sin* springing out of the Head of *Satan*, seems a beautiful Allegory of Pride, which is look'd upon as the first Offence committed against God. But I question if *Satan*, getting his Daughter with Child, is an Invention to be approv'd of. I am afraid that Fiction is but a meer Quibble ; for if Sin was of a masculine Gender in *English*, as it is in all the other Languages, that whole Affair drops, and the Fiction vanishes away. But suppose we are not so nice, and we allow *Satan* to be in love with *Sin*, because this Word is made feminine in English (as *Death* passes also for masculine) what a horrid and loathsome Idea does *Milton* present to the Mind, in this Fiction ? *Sin* brings forth *Death*, this Monster inflam'd with Lust and Rage, lies with his Mother, as she had done with her Father. From

that new Commerce, springs a Swarm of Serpents, which creep in and out of their Mother's Womb, and gnaw and tear the Bowels they are born from.

Let such a Picture be never so beautifully drawn, let the Allegory be never so obvious, and so clear, still it will be intolerable, on the account of its Foulness. That Complication of Horrors, that Mixture of Incest, that Heap of Monsters, that Loathsomeness so far fetch'd, cannot but shock a Reader of delicate Taste.

But what is more intolerable, there are Parts in that Fiction, which bearing no Allegory at all, have no manner of Excuse. There is no Meaning in the Communication between Death and Sin, 'tis distasteful without any Purpose; or if any Allegory lies under it, the filthy Abomination of the Thing is certainly more obvious than the Allegory.

I see with Admiration, *Sin*, the Portress of Hell, opening the Gates of the Abyss, but unable to shut them again: That is really beautiful, because 'tis true. But what signifies *Satan* and *Death* quarrelling together, grinning at one another, and ready to fight?

The Fiction of *Chaos*, *Night*, and *Discord*, is rather a Picture, than an Allegory; and, for ought I know, deserves

to be approv'd, because it strikes the Reader with Awe, not with Horror.

I know the Bridge built by Death and Sin, would be dislik'd in *France*. The nice Criticks of that Country would urge against that Fiction, that it seems too common, and that it is useless; for Men's Souls want no paved Way, to be thrown into Hell, after their Separation from the Body.

They would laugh justly at the Paradise of Fools, at the Hermits, Fryars, Cows, Beads, Indulgencies, Bulls, Reliques toss'd by the Winds, at St. Peter's waiting with his Keys at the Wicket of Heaven. And surely the most passionate Admirers of *Milton*, could not vindicate those low, comical Imaginations, which belong by Right to *Ariosto*.

Now the sublimest of all the Fictions calls me to examine it. I mean the War in Heaven. The Earl of *Roscommon*, and Mr. *Addison* (whose Judgment seems either to guide, or to justify the Opinion of his Countrymen) admire chiefly that Part of the Poem. They bestow all the Skill of their Criticism, and the Strength of their Eloquence, to set off that favourite Part. I may affirm, that the very Things they admire, would not be tolerated by the *French* Criticks. The Reader will perhaps see with Pleasure, in

what consists so strange a Difference, and what may be the Ground of it.

First, they would assert, that a War in Heaven being an imaginary Thing, which lies out of the Reach of our Nature, should be contracted in two or three Pages, rather than lengthen'd out into two Books ; because we are naturally impatient of removing from us the Objects which are not adapted to our Senses.

According to that Rule, they would maintain, that it is an idle Task to give the Reader the full Character of the Leaders of that War, and to describe *Raphael, Michael, Abdiel, Moloch, and Nisroth*, as *Homer* paints *Ajax, Diomedes, and Hector*.

For what avails it to draw at length the Picture of these Beings, so utterly Strangers to the Reader, that he cannot be affected any way towards them ? By the same Reason, the long Speeches of these imaginary Warriors, either before the Battle, or in the Middle of the Action, their mutual Insults, seem an injudicious Imitation of *Homer*.

The aforesaid Criticks would not bear with the Angels plucking up the Mountains, with their Woods, their Waters, and their Rocks, and flinging them on the heads of their Enemies. Such a Contrivance (they would say) is the
more

more puerile, the more it aims at Greatness. Angels arm'd with Mountains in Heaven, resemble too much the Dipsodes in *Rabelais*, who wore an Armour of *Portland Stone* six Foot thick.

The Artillery seems of the same kind, yet more trifling, because more useless.

To what purpose are these Engines brought in? Since they cannot wound the Enemies, but only remove them from their Places, and make them tumble down: Indeed (if the Expression may be forgiven) 'tis to play at Nine-pins. And the very Thing which is so dreadfully great on Earth, becomes very low and ridiculous in Heaven.

I cannot omit here, the visible Contradiction which reigns in that Episode. God sends his faithful Angels to fight, to conquer, and to punish the Rebels. Go (says he, to *Michael* and *Gabriel*)

——— *And to the Brow of Heaven*
Pursuing, drive them out from God and Bliss,
Into their Place of Punishment, the Gulph
Of Tartarus, which ready opens wide
His fiery Chaos to receive their Fall.

How does it come to pass, after such a positive Order, that the Battle hangs doubtful? And why did God the Father command *Gabriel* and *Raphael*, to

do what he executes afterwards by his Son only.

I leave it to the Readers, to pronounce, if these Observations are right, or ill-grounded, and if they are carried too far. But in case these Exceptions are just, the severest Critick must however confess, there are Perfections enough in *Milton*, to atone for all his Defects.

I must beg leave to conclude this Article on *Milton*, with two Observations.

His Hero (I mean *Adam*, his first Personage) is unhappy. That demonstrates against all the Criticks, that a very good Poem may end unfortunately, in spite of all their pretended Rules. Secondly, The *Paradise Lost* ends compleatly. The Thread of the Fable is spun out to the last. *Milton* and *Tasso* have been careful of not stopping short and abruptly. The one does not abandon *Adam* and *Eve*, till they are driven out of *Eden*. The other does not conclude, before *Jerusalem* is taken. *Homer* and *Virgil* took a contrary Way; the *Iliad* ends with the Death of *Hector*; the *Æneid*, with that of *Turnus*: The Tribe of Commentators have upon that enacted a Law, that a House ought never to be finish'd, because *Homer* and *Virgil* did not compleat their own; but if *Homer* had taken *Troy*, and *Virgil* married *Lavinia* to *Æneas*,
the

the Criticks would have laid down a Rule just the contrary.

Was I sway'd by the common Affectation of commending our native Country abroad, I would endeavour in this place, to set off, to the best Advantage, some of our *Epick* Poems; but I must frankly own, among more than fifty which I have read, there is not one tolerable. Then instead of throwing away an unavailable Criticism upon some wretched *French* Poem, I am reduced to inquire why we have not a good one; for it seems a little strange, that a Nation who boasts of having succeeded so well in all the other Parts of Poetry, falls so short of herself in that Particular.

I have heard the *French* Tongue arraigned in *England* of Insufficiency, as being neither strong nor lofty enough to reach the Sublimity of *Epick* Poetry.

I am apt to think, that every Language has its own particular Genius, flowing chiefly from the Genius of the Nation, and partly from its own Nature.

On the one side, more or less Liberty in the Government, and in Religion, a more or less free Conversation between the two Sexes, the Influence of the first Authors who have written with Success,

cess, and whose Stile is become the general Standard, all these Means have a great share in determining the Nature of a Language, in making it extensive or stinted, strong or weak, sublime or low.

On the other side, the Roughness of too many Consonants, the Softness of predominant Vowels, the Length or the Shortness of the Words, more or less Articles, and the like, give a strong Bias to an Idiom, and render it more or less susceptible of some particular ways of writing.

Thus if we consider the Softness and Effeminacy into which the Luxuriancy of Vowels emasculates the *Italian* Tongue, and the Idleness in which the *Italians* spend all their Life, busy only in the pursuit of those Arts which soften the Mind ; we must not wonder if that Language passes (as it were) for the Language of Love.

The Freedom of Society in *France*, and the Turn of the Phrases, which, as they admit of no Transposition, are the more perspicuous, qualify exceedingly the *French* Tongue for Conversation. The former Roughness of the *English* Language, now improv'd into Strength and Energy ; its Copiousness, its admitting of many Inversions, fit it for more sublime Performances. Besides, the Force of that Idiom is wonderfully

derfully heighten'd, by the Nature of the Government, which allows the *English* to speak in publick, and by the Liberty of Conscience, which makes them more conversant in the Scripture, and hath rendered the Language of the Prophets so familiar to them, that their Poetry favours very much of that *Eastern* out-of-the-way Sublimity; nay, sixty or eighty Years ago, all the Speeches in Parliament were cramm'd with Expressions taken from the *Jewish* Writings. But such predominant Qualifications of a Language, do not imply an Exclusion of any other Aptitude in it. Lofty Performances have been made in *Italian*. Some *English* Poets have written gracefully upon Love, and it is not impossible for the *French* to have an *Epick* Poem.

The *French* Tongue has Strength and Majesty enough in *Corneille's* Tragedies. Nay, now and then it soars up in his Plays beyond the true Measure of Sublime. Far from wanting Force or Grandeur, I dare affirm it labours under a contrary Defect. And this is a Secret which I unfold willingly. We can hardly express common Things with Felicity in our Heroick Poetry. The Genius of the Nation, and consequently the Turn of the Language, does not allow us to
come

come down to the Description of the Trappings of a Horse, of the Wheels of a Chariot, &c. We can commend rural Life in general, but not specify, with Dignity, the little Particularities belonging to it. This Task is avoided by all our skilful Writers, who are conscious of the Defectiveness of the Language in that respect. It short, such is our Disadvantage, that there is an infinite Number of Things, which we dare neither call by their Names, nor express by a Periphrase. Mr. Pope, in his Translation of *Homer*, may without any risque, wound a Hero, *where the Bone and the Bladder meet*, or pierce him through the *right Shoulder*. He may say after his Original :

—the Dart—pierced a vital Part,
Full in his Face it entered, and betwixt
The Nose, and the Eye-Ball, the proud Lician
Crash'd all his Jaws, and cleft the Tongue
Till the bright Point look'd out beneath the

The like Attempt in *French*, would be thought Burlesque. The Fields of Nature lie wide and open for the *English* to range through at pleasure, whilst we are

are stinted and oblig'd to walk with too much Circumspection.

To this happy Freedom, that the *British* Nation enjoys in every Thing, are owing many excellent poetical Versions of the ancient Poets ; whereas the *French* are reduced to translate *Virgil*, *Homer*, *Lucretius*, and *Ovid*, in Prose.

Mr. *de la Motte*, a Member of the *French* Academy, is the only Man of some Reputation, who attempted the *Iliad* in Verse ; but he was forced to contract the four and twenty Books of *Homer* into twelve, yet those twelve do not contain so many Verses as four Books of *Homer* do. His *Iliad* is a short Abridgment of the *Greek*, and yet is judg'd to be exceedingly too long.

After all, if that Slavery, if that Coyness of the *French* Language, makes it unfit for translating *Homer* and *Virgil*, yet I do not perceive how that should hinder the Nation from having an *Epick* Poem of her own Growth ?

A Poem, methinks, might subsist very well without the help of mechanick, or anatomical Descriptions. We rather require of an Author to excite our Passions, to unfold the most intricate Recesses of the Soul, to describe the Customs of the Nations, to mark the Differences which arise in the Characters of
Men,

Men, from the different Governments they are born under ; in short, to speak the Language of the polite World ; than to play the Surgeon, the Carpenter, or the Joiner, though never so elegantly.

Cardinal *de Retz*, and the Earl of *Clarendon*, in their Memoirs, unravel all the Springs of the Civil Wars, and draw, at full Length, the Pictures of those whose Ambition shook the Foundation of their respective Countries. But neither of these two great Writers, makes it his particular Care to describe, with Accuracy, how such a Colonel was wounded through the Bladder, and such a Captain in the Kidneys. Nor do they throw away their Time in describing elegantly of what Wood the Benches of the House of Parliament were made. Why then should an *Epick* Poet lie under the necessity of elaborating those little Descriptions which every noble Historian avoids with care ?

Some impute our want of an *Epick* Poem, to the Shackles of Rhime. They say, that the jingling Return of the same Sounds, which are chiming on, in the same Stops, Measures, Pauses, without any Variety, or any Relief to the Ear, must needs occasion an insupportable Uniformity throughout all the Work. They urge, that Slavery cramps the noblest

blest Genius, and a Poet, instead of using Rhime as an Ornament serviceable to his Sense, makes his own Thoughts subservient to Rhime.

They add, Rhime is a barbarous *Gothick* Invention, owing to the dull Sprightliness of the Monks, and contend that nothing good can be built with so bad a Material.

First, I must confess we are Slaves to Rhime in *France*, and our Slavery is altogether irretrievable. Nay, all our Tragedies ought to be rhimed: For our Poetry being fetter'd by too strict Rules, admitting of no Inversions, nor of Verses incroaching upon one another, would have nothing but Loftiness of Stile to distinguish it from Prose, if it were not for Rhime. We have no manner of pretence to Blank Verse, we must keep to Rhime necessarily; and whosoever would attempt to throw off a Burthen which *Mr. Boileau*, *Racine*, and *Corneille*, have so gloriously sustained, would be thought rather weak than bold, and certainly would meet with a very unkind Reception.

As to that pretended Uniformity, and Tedioufness, objected against Verses in Rhime, it is not to be found in Authors truly good, of whatsoever Country. *Tasso* is read with Pleasure, though all his Verses,

Verfes, nay, almoſt all his Syllables end in *a, e, i, o*. And thoſe who ſay Rhime is an Invention of the Monks of the ſeventh Century, are utterly in the wrong. All the Nations whoſe Languages are known to us, have Verfes in Rhime, except the *Greeks* and the *Romans*.

The Return of the ſame Sounds, is a kind of natural Muſick, more obvious to the Ear, and more eaſily reduc'd into an Art, than the *Quantity* of Syllables. It is true, that Diſtinction between long and ſhort Syllables afforded to the *Romans* and *Greeks* an harmonious Variety of Sounds, which by their Quickneſs or Gravity, were wonderfully expreſſive of the impetuous, or ſlow Motions of the Soul. But we ought not (becauſe we want ſo great an Advantage) to neglect the only one we are in poſſeſſion of, and in the room of which we have nothing to ſet up. Shou'd we not manure our own Soil, becauſe ſome others are more fruitful?

After theſe little Hints upon our Language, and our Verſification, I will own, that an *Epick* Poem is a harder Task in *France*, than in any other Country whatever; not purely becauſe we *Rhime*, but becauſe our Rhimes, as well as the other Parts of our Verſification, are ty'd down
to

to most insupportable and insignificant Rules; not because our Language wants Loftiness, but because it wants Freedom. For it is with our Heroick Poetry, as with our Trade, we come up to the *English* in neither, for want of being a Free Nation.

Slavery is generally an Obstacle to Abundance. Our coy Language is not as copious as it should be. We have discarded a multitude of old energetic Expressions, the Loss of which has weakened the Stock of the *French* Tongue, as the compelling our Protestants away hath thinned the Nation. The *English* have naturalized many of our antiquated Words, as they have done our Countrymen, and so they have increased their Language, as well as their People, at our Expence.

But the greatest Enemy to *Epick* Poetry in *France*, is the Turn of the Genius of our Nation. It is almost impossible for us to venture on any Machinery. The antient Gods are exploded out of the World. The present Religion cannot succeed them among us. The Cherub, and the Seraph, which act so noble a part in *Milton*, would find it very hard to work their way into a *French* Poem. The very Words of *Gabriel*, *Michael*, *Raphael*, would run a great hazard of being made a Jest of. Our Saints, who make so good a Fi-
I
gure

gure in our Churches, make a very sorry one in our *Epick* Poems. St. *Dennis*, St. *Christopher*, St. *Rock*, and St. *Genevieve*, ought to appear in Print no where but in our Prayer-Books, and in the History of the Saints; a noble Volume, which contains more Wonders than any Machinery could afford.

To conclude, the best Reason I can offer for our ill Success in *Epick* Poetry, is the Insufficiency of all who have attempted it. I can add nothing further, after this ingenuous Confession.

F I N I S.



2^d edition

Written by Voltaire in English while
an exile in this country. See the
Advertisement to the Reader: "It has
the appearance of too great a presumption
in a Traveller who hath been but eighteen
months in England, to attempt to write
in a Language which he cannot pronounce
at all, and which he hardly understands
in conversation."

